

**16 MAPPED ROUTES**



**HIGHLANDS, DALES,  
DEVON, SNOWDONIA**

£4.45  
APRIL 2015



# The Great Outdoors

**THRILLING NEW ROUTES UP CLASSIC FELLS**

# LAKE DISTRICT

**GNARLY  
NORTH  
FACES!**



**SCAFEL PIKE | SKIDDAW | BOWFELL | PILLAR | DALE HEAD**



**+  
FIVE-WEEK  
BACKPACKING  
EPIC**

**AONACH  
EAGACH**

IS THIS SCOTLAND'S BEST  
SCRAMBLING DAY OUT?

**ALPINE  
ADRENALINE**

SCALING GERMANY'S  
HIGHEST PEAK



**GEAR  
TESTS**

SOFTSHELLS +  
TREKKING POLES

**SKILLS GUIDES: PHOTOGRAPHY, FIRST AID TIPS PT.1 AND MORE**



WORLD  
PREMIERE

HIKING SHOES CREATED FOR RAIN AND SHINE

# FEEL GOOD



INDUSTRY  
AWARD 2014



**DURABLY  
WATERPROOF**

## SURROUND<sup>TM</sup>

The **first** all-around breathable  
and waterproof hiking shoe.



**ALL-AROUND  
BREATHABLE**



[www.ellis-brigham.com](http://www.ellis-brigham.com)







## The secrets of TGO



When we commission articles for *The Great Outdoors*, we look at all manner of elements across the magazine: Is there a good geographical spread? Does the pacing change? Do the photos have that 'I want to be there' quality? Are the writers experienced and authentic? Does the piece fit the general theme? There are more practical considerations too – is there a good coverline? Is it within budget?

We also plan way ahead. As you are enjoying snow, I'm lapping up the summer months and writing about midges. Sometimes articles need a lot of work, sometimes they fit straight in. Regular contributors know how we work, but occasionally a piece pops up by a new writer that surprises us. Stefan Durkacz's article about walking the Tay watershed is one. It's what I'd label the 'quiet article' in the mix, yet it resonates so much. Stefan describes himself as an inexperienced backpacker, with big aspirations, in this case, 290-miles across Scotland. Over the five weeks we see him take a journey both on foot and in his mind. He questions things many of us do during low moments on the trail, and we recognise the highs. "I began to wonder what I'd got myself into. I had no idea whether I could complete such a long walk, let alone enjoy it". It resonated for one main reason: its unflinching honesty. And that's what all good writing has. Find out how he fares on page 44.

The designer on that article (with lovely pictures) was Geoff Barton, our art editor who is sadly leaving us, swapping the mountains for the sea in his new job. He's had a huge hand over the last few years in turning *The Great Outdoors* into the lovely looking publication we have today and will be missed. *Daniel Neilson, Feb 17 2015, London*



**100 of the world's greatest outdoor experiences and challenges on land and water**

Featuring a global bucket list of challenges ranging from achievable to extreme. Including:  
**Wild camping in Scotland**  
**Trekking in the Himalaya**  
**Extreme marathons**  
**Mountain biking through Colorado**  
**Hiking through the Swedish wilderness**

And much more!

**BUY NOW - ONLY £9.99**

[shop.tgomagazine.co.uk](http://shop.tgomagazine.co.uk)

**OR DOWNLOAD - ONLY £6.99**

[tgomagazine.co.uk/apps](http://tgomagazine.co.uk/apps)





## ADAPTIVE° CONTROL

THREE VERSATILE LAYERS  
ONE COMPLETE SYSTEM

### BASE

MECO 120 S/S TEE (130g)  
Innovative merino wool blend  
provides next to skin comfort.

### MID

BASELINE JACKET (360g)  
Modern stretchy hooded  
fleece regulates temperature.

### OUTER

MUZTAG JACKET (340g)  
Fully featured hardshell protects  
from rain, snow & wind.

°eVent



---

FOR THE MOST EXTREME CONDITIONS IN THE WORLD



WWW.RAB.EQUIPMENT



# Contents

April 2015



MOUNTAINS



ROUTES



SKILLS



GEAR

## Features

### p24

#### Scrambling Aonach Eagach

Could this be Scotland's best scrambling day out? Hanna Lindon thinks so

### p32

#### The great north faces of Lakeland

Discover a new edge to some of the Lake District's best mountains

### p40

#### Heaven in hell

Daniel Neilson scales Germany's highest mountain through the Hell Valley

### p48

#### An Icelandic expedition

The northern wilderness is charted on a ten-day adventure by Steve Bull

### p54

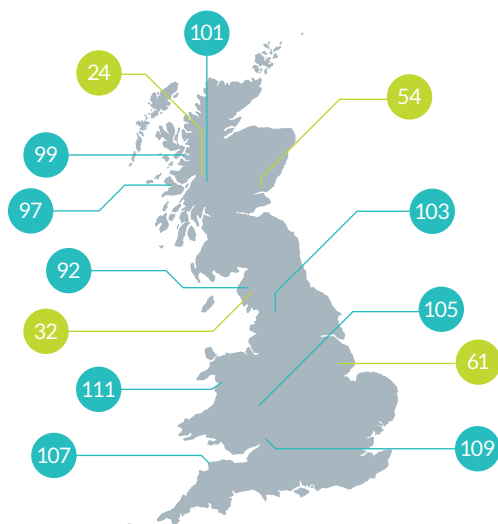
#### Walking the River Tay watershed

An epic 290-mile backpacking journey in Scotland

### p61

#### England's lost wilderness

Edoardo Albert ventures into the untamed wetlands of south-east England



## Regulars

### Escapes

*Inspiration to get away*

10 Great Gable, Lake District

12 Marsco, Isle of Skye

14 Edale, Peak District

### Almanac

*In the outdoors this month*

16 Pennine Way

17 Events

18 Skies

18 Charity walk

20 New gear trends

22 EOCA

### Viewpoint

*TGO opinions and comment*

65 Mountain Magic

66 Backpacking

67 Environment

68 Hillwalkers' Library

69 Book reviews

70 Letters

### Hill Skills

*Our experts divulge the tips and know-how you need for the hills*

72 Golden-hour photography

74 Dealing with an accident

76 Packing a canoe

### Gear

*The latest news, reviews and product comparisons*

78 New Gear

80 Women's softshells

84 Trekking poles

90 Gear top fives

### Wild Walks

*Walking routes across England, Scotland and Wales*

92 **Keswick weekender:** Skiddaw from Keswick

+ Derwentwater hilltop circular

97 **Isle of Mull,** Inner Hebrides

99 **Inverie to Ladhar Bheinn,** Knoydart

101 **Meall Lighiche,** Western Highlands

103 **Upper Arkengarthdale,** Yorkshire Dales

105 **Black Rhadley and Heath Mynd,** Shropshire

107 **Cawsand (aka Cosdon Hill),** Devon

109 **St Briavels Castle to Chepstow Castle,** Wales/England

111 **Mawddach Trail,** Snowdonia

114 Readers' photos





40

**AMAZING  
SUBSCRIPTION  
OFFERS! p30**

**FREE**  
**PÁRAMO  
SMOCK**  
OR SIGG BOTTLE



**In the next issue: Backpacking special!**



**Features:** 65 days around  
Wales, Sweden, Lake District



**Gear:** Mountaineering tents,  
cheap waterproof jackets



**Routes:** Snowdonia, North  
York Moors, Isle of Mull



**Skills:** First aid, backpacking  
equipment, nutrition

**PLUS** Ed Byrne learns to save lives, photo essay, Everest's Sherpas



## Hanna Lindon

Hanna recently got back from walking in Tenerife where she climbed the island's third-highest peak and walked a few long-distance routes in the Anaga Rural Park. Next she'll be jetting off to Mallorca to tackle the Cavall Bernat ridge – one of Europe's most exciting scrambles – before returning for a week of ridge walking in Torridon.

**Escape for 2015:** "It's my honeymoon in May, so I'll be escaping to Canada for some adventurous walking around Jasper and Banff national parks."



## Tim Gent

New Year found Tim under canvas on the shore of a Scottish loch, the weather conspiring to make it possibly his wettest and windiest Hogmanay outing to date. Back home, with Dartmoor on the doorstep, some fine upland wandering peppered the intervening days, a couple even brightened by a half-decent fall of the fun white stuff.

**Escape for 2015:** "By the time you read this I'll probably be back in Scotland, with another Arctic Scandinavia trip planned for summer."



## Chris Townsend

With snow lying deep in the Cairngorms, Chris Townsend has been out ski touring and snowshoeing both in the mountains above Glen Feshie and in the woods and fields outside his front door. The snow is so soft and deep that without skis or snowshoes he's found progress arduous and slow.

**Escape for 2015:** "In the summer I'm planning on a long trip to the High Sierra in California for some sunny backpacking."



## Stefan Durkacz

Since returning to London and 'the nine to five' after walking the River Tay watershed in summer 2014, Stefan has been splitting his outdoors time between long walks in the wilder corners of Kent, Sussex and Surrey, and getting his hands dirty introducing his children to the joys of bug hunts and playing outdoors in winter. It's never too early to start the conditioning!

**Escape for 2015:** "A backpacking trip over the hills of Ardgour, possibly the best-kept secret of the west coast of Scotland with plenty of solitude to spare."

## Daniel Neilson

Reporting on the great outdoors seems to meant quite a lot of time in the warm indoors, particularly at the ISPO tradeshow in Munich. It's a vast four-day showcase of outdoor gear that will be released next winter (see round-up on 20). On page 40 he recounts a brilliant trip to the German Alps, and hopes to be back that way again soon.

**Escape for 2015:** "I'm aiming to get one more trip up to the Highlands soon before our second child arrives in June. Then it'll be just mountains of nappies."

## Ronald Turnbull

Ronald has been enjoying Lakeland's January, with a three-day walk from Keswick to Conistone taking in Scafell Pike's north face under slightly Eiger-like conditions of low cloud and falling snow (see page 32). "Enjoy" wasn't altogether the appropriate term for the overnight bivvy in upper Eskdale, with 13 hours of darkness and 4 inches of fresh slush by morning.

**Escape for 2015:** "US hiking means immense distances and very heavy loads in the land that invented the backpack. I'll be escaping that by going to the one part of the Rocky Mountains, west of Boulder Colorado, where they have a system of mountain huts."

Editor  
**Emily Rodway**

Acting Editor  
**Daniel Neilson**  
[daniel.neilson@tgomagazine.co.uk](mailto:daniel.neilson@tgomagazine.co.uk)

Equipment Editor  
**Chris Townsend**  
[christownsendoutdoors@gmail.com](mailto:christownsendoutdoors@gmail.com)

Editorial Assistant  
**Will Renwick**  
[william.renwick@tgomagazine.co.uk](mailto:william.renwick@tgomagazine.co.uk)

Art Editor  
**Geoff Barton**

Advertising Manager  
**Lucy Weston**  
020 7618 3452  
[lucy.weston@tgomagazine.co.uk](mailto:lucy.weston@tgomagazine.co.uk)

Marketing Manager  
**Dan Foley**

Marketing Executive  
**Tanika Callum**

Production Manager  
**Julian Creber**

Production Controller  
**Alec Linley**

Publishing Director  
**Alex McLachlan**

Managing Director  
**Tim Whitehouse**

**Published by**  
Newsquest Specialist Media,  
30 Cannon Street, London, EC4M 6YJ  
020 7618 3456

**Letters to the editor**  
TGO, Newsquest Specialist Media,  
30 Cannon Street, London, EC4M 6YJ

**Registered address**  
Newsquest Media Group, Loudwater  
Mill, Station Road, High Wycombe,  
Buckinghamshire, HP10 9TY

**Distributed by**  
Seymour Distribution Ltd,  
2, East Poultry Avenue, London  
EC1A 9PT 020 7429 4000

All freelance contributions to  
The Great Outdoors are published  
under Newsquest's standard terms  
and conditions, which are available  
here: [www.tgomagazine.co.uk/  
contributors/contributors.html](http://www.tgomagazine.co.uk/contributors/contributors.html).  
A hard copy is available upon request.

**Subscriptions & Back Issues**  
Call 01371 851867  
email: [tgo@escosubs.co.uk](mailto:tgo@escosubs.co.uk)  
online: [tgomagazine.co.uk/subscribe](http://tgomagazine.co.uk/subscribe)

**Annual Rates**  
(13 issues including postage):  
UK: £44.95, Overseas surface: £62.50,  
Airmail: £72.50  
Members of YHA, SYHA, LDWA,  
Ramblers, BMC, SRoWS, MCoFS  
& the Backpackers' Club: £34.25.

Printed by Warners Midlands Plc

Problems finding TGO?  
020 7618 3089

ISSN 0140-7570

Member of the Periodical  
Publishers Association.

Outline maps by FreeVectorMaps.com

Ask your newsagent to reserve  
or deliver TGO regularly.







get vertical.

WIN A MOUNTAIN EXPERIENCE  
AND AN AUSTRALIAN ADVENTURE!

Go to **getvertical.salewa.com** and win a  
unique SALEWA Basecamp Experience –  
and even an unforgettable adventure trip  
to Australia!

**salewa.com**



Official partners of SALEWA









## Great Gable, Lake District

"I'd been on the Bob Graham Round with a stinking cold for about four days at this point, and at teatime on the flank of Great Gable looking west down Langdale the weather contrived to lift my spirits and inspire the final push to the top. About an hour after this there was a huge thunderstorm and I got a proper soaking before putting up my shelter along from Green Gable."

Photo by **David Lintern**  
[davidlintern.com](http://davidlintern.com)



p32 | North Faces of Lakeland





## Marsco, Isle of Skye

"You could easily be forgiven for overlooking Marsco: it is a relatively diminutive little mountain, failing to make even the list of Corbetts in a land dominated by the most epic of the Munros. But with views over the entire Black Cuillin to its west, the whole red Cuillin to its north and even Bla Bheinn to the south, Marsco will win you over by giving the most spectacular views for the least effort of any mountain in the area."

Photo by **Dougie Cunningham**  
[leadinglines.net](http://leadinglines.net)



p24 | Scotland's other great ridge walk











## Pennine Way, Edale

"For this, my last issue as designer of TGO, I've picked this image from my first trip to the hills that featured in these pages. It was taken on the Pennine Way, just outside Edale, on the way up to Kinder Scout. The walk that day involved climbing Jacob's Ladder and circumnavigating the edge to Kinder Downfall, followed by the obligatory lost ramblings across the plateau. It was a wonderful day, and although I won't be directly involved with this magazine anymore, there'll be many more spent in the hills!"

Photo by **Geoff Barton**  
[geoffbartondesign.com](http://geoffbartondesign.com)



p16 | Pennine Way











# Almanac April

16 Pennine Way 17 Events 18 April skies 18 Young Dementia UK 20 New trends in gear 22 EOCA

## April in the hills



Swaledale, Yorkshire Dales

Photo: Paul Harris, Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority

Photo: Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority

## Four sights to see along the Pennine Way

### ▶ Kinder Scout, Peak District

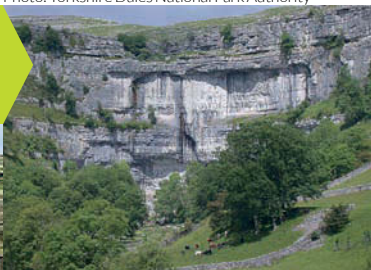
The scene of the infamous Kinder Trespass, when in 1932 hundreds marched to the plateau in defiance of restricted access laws. The fell is the highest point in the Peak District and is home to the tallest waterfall in the Park – the 30-metre high Kinder Downfall.



Photo: Geoff Barton

### ▶ Malham Cove, Yorkshire Dales

Eighty-metre high limestone cliffs form a natural amphitheatre around the head of a valley that slopes down to Malham village.



### ▶ Pen-y-ghent, Yorkshire Dales

A big lump of a mountain that rises straight up from the gentle surrounding landscape. Wainwright wrote in his Pennine Way Companion that the best time to head to the 694m summit is in April, a time when the purple saxifrage plant coats the cliffs with “vivid splashes of colour”.

Photo: Paul Harris, Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority





SYHActive Day



Isles of Scilly Walking Festival

Photo: Visit Isles of Scilly



Outdoor  
Events

## Happy Birthday to the Pennine Way

On the 24th of April Britain's first ever National Trail, The Pennine Way, will celebrate half a century since its creation. And it's a date worth celebrating: the opening of the 268-mile path in 1965 being a landmark moment in the history of access rights in the UK.

The idea for the path was originally proposed in 1935 when rambler and journalist Tom Stephenson wrote an article for the Daily Herald titled 'Wanted: A Long Green Trail'. He dreamt of Britain's own version of America's Appalachian Trail and saw a path through 'the backbone of England' as the best place for this. His vision was to open up a landscape that the public at the time were largely restricted from enjoying, an idea born from the same feeling of injustice that was earlier reflected in the mass-trespass of Kinder Scout in 1932.

It was still a 30-year wait

before the Pennine Way finally became a reality. On the opening day, a ceremony was held on Malham Moor which more than 2,000 people attended, and of course, Tom Stephenson himself was among them. The day was a celebration of a new opportunity for people to enjoy the Peak District, Yorkshire Dales, Cumbrian Fells and the Northumbrian moorland. Fifty years on, the day can now be celebrated as the moment that sparked the creation of the many long distance paths that link up almost every corner of the country.

Trail Manager for the Way, Steve Westwood, has announced there will be "quite a party" to mark the day, with plans to make sure that every foot of the path is covered.

Visit [nationaltrail.co.uk/pennine-way](http://nationaltrail.co.uk/pennine-way) for more information.



Photo: Steve Westwood

### High Cup Nick, Cumbria

Grey-blue dolerite crags wrap around a long glaciated valley in this Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in the North Pennines. Yet another geological wonder on the Pennine Way.

9-12 APRIL

### Chepstow Walking Weekend Festival

Walks exploring Chepstow and its surroundings – which of course include the picturesque Wye Valley. The weekend will have a focus on families, with town trails and a treasure hunt as part of the programme.

[walksinchestow.co.uk](http://walksinchestow.co.uk)

11 APRIL

### Three Towers Hike

Reading Scouts host this long running (founded in the 1970s) and long distance challenge event for teams. Entrants can choose from lengths of 70, 45, 40, 25 or 20km and must complete their chosen trail within 24 hours. All routes are set around Reading and the Berkshire countryside.

[hike.org.uk](http://hike.org.uk)

11-17 APRIL

### Walk Scilly

Back by popular demand. Over 20 guided walks across the Isles' islands – including on some of the uninhabited ones. Many of them will be themed, with historical tours, trips to flower farms and a foraging trip.

[visitislesofscilly.com](http://visitislesofscilly.com)

11-15 APRIL

### Berwick upon Tweed Walking Festival

The festival returns after its successful debut last year. This time it will feature guided walks on trails such as St Cuthbert's Way and the Pilgrim's Causeway and will suit all abilities, ranging from 5 to 25 kilometres.

[berwickwalking.co.uk](http://berwickwalking.co.uk)

18 APRIL

### SYHActive Day

A challenge event to fundraise for the Scottish Youth Hostel Association's youth activity programmes. Based at Rowardennan hostel, individuals or teams will be required to run or walk for 10 miles then cycle 34 miles, all in all taking in Ben Lomond and Arklet, Chon and Ard lochs. Alongside this there will be a showcase event at the hostel, with music and taster sessions in a number of things including canoeing and raft building.

[syha.org.uk/syhactive](http://syha.org.uk/syhactive)

18-25 APRIL

### Bosccastle Walking Week

Over ten walks of varying difficulty but all achievable within three hours. The walks will take in Bosccastle's surroundings and other locations in Cornwall such as Padstow and Bodmin Moor. Themed walks will include 'Barefoot Bude' and 'Cornish Landscape and Language'.

[bosccastlefestival.co.uk](http://bosccastlefestival.co.uk)

25 APRIL – 4 MAY

### Ulverston WalkFest

Ten days of walks to celebrate the natural environment, industrial heritage and local history of the market town on the fringes of the Lake District National Park. It will also feature a talk by mountain writer and photographer Bill Birkett for a ticketed event on 29 April in the town's Coronation Hall.

[ulverstonwalkfest.co.uk](http://ulverstonwalkfest.co.uk)



## April skies



### Sunrises & Sunsets



1 | **Ullapool** Wester Ross  
 April 1 06.47 → 20.01  
 April 30 05.29 → 21.05

2 | **Ambleside** Lake District  
 April 1 06.43 → 19.48  
 April 30 05.43 → 20.43

3 | **Whitby** North Yorks  
 April 1 06.33 → 19.38  
 April 30 05.35 → 20.33

4 | **Llanberis** Wales  
 April 1 06.49 → 19.51  
 April 30 05.44 → 20.43

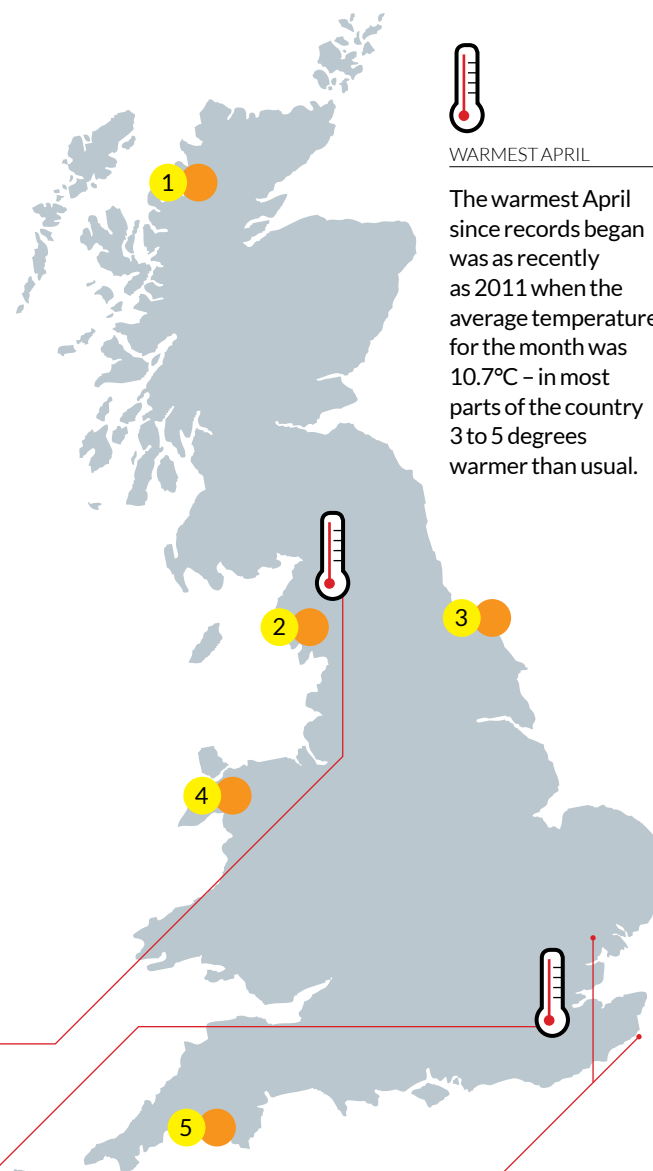
5 | **Truro** Cornwall  
 April 1 06.55 → 19.52  
 April 30 05.56 → 20.37

### COLDEST APRIL DAY

**Newton Rig**, Cumbria  
 -15°C  
 2 April 1917

### HOTTEST APRIL DAY

**Camden Square**, London  
 29.4°C  
 16 April 1949



### WARMEST APRIL

The warmest April since records began was as recently as 2011 when the average temperature for the month was 10.7°C – in most parts of the country 3 to 5 degrees warmer than usual.

### APRIL EARTHQUAKES

On April 6 1580 the Dover Strait was hit by an earthquake thought to have measured over 5 on the Richter scale. The most destructive one since then occurred on 22 April 1884 when thousands of homes around Colchester were damaged by one estimated at 4.7 on the scale.

## The healing outdoors

*Ben Lerwill takes to the countryside with a group of young people suffering from early onset dementia and finds a fresh perspective on the walk*

IT'S A BRIGHT WINTER'S DAY, and seventeen of us – plus an astonishingly lively Jack Russell – are walking through the Oxfordshire countryside. The sun's out, and the path's leading past thatched cottages and sheep pastures. There's even the odd cherry tree pushing out early blossom buds. To all intents and purposes, it's the kind of short but agreeable group walk that might be encountered in any part of the UK. Except it's rather more than that.

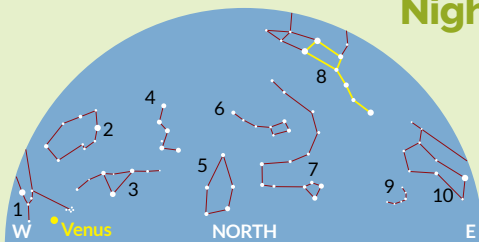
"The outdoors diffuses things," a lady named Val is telling me. "That's why a walk like this is always such a good opportunity to talk." She's here with her partner, a man who has been diagnosed with

**"The outdoors diffuses things. That's why a walk like this is always such a good opportunity to talk"**

young onset dementia. Similarly, everyone else on the walk is either diagnosed, or supports someone, with the same condition.

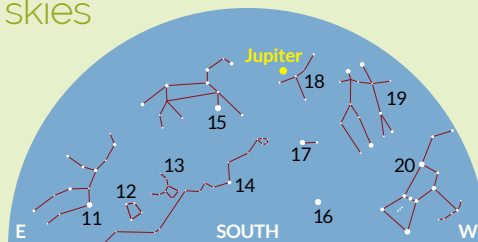
Young onset dementia – also known as early onset dementia – affects people under 65 and is defined as "a degeneration of the brain that causes a progressive decline in the ability to think, reason, communicate and remember". It's made recent headlines, thanks in part to the

## Night skies



**Full Moon** April 4  
**New Moon** April 18

Approximate star positions for April evening skies  
**Looking north:** 1| Aldebaran, const. Taurus; 2| Capella, const. Auriga; 3| Const. Perseus; 4| Const. Cassiopeia; 5| Const.



Cepheus; 6| Polaris, const. Ursa Minor; 7| Const. Draco; 8| The Plough, const. Ursa Major; 9| Corona Borealis; 10| Arcturus, const. Boötes; **Looking south:** 11| Spica, const. Virgo; 12| Const. Corvus; 13| Const. Crater; 14| Alpheratz, const. Hydra; 15| Regulus, const. Leo; 16| Sirius; 17| Procyon, const. Canis Minor; 18| Const. Cancer; 19| Const. Gemini; 20| Betelgeuse, const. Orion.



YDUK Walk on 13 March 2013



Oscar-nominated film *Still Alice*, which features Julianne Moore as a middle-aged academic who develops Alzheimer's.

The walk, then, is primarily a means of support, a chance for people with young onset dementia and their partners to talk frankly about the often distressing issues they have to deal with. For an outsider like me, it's humbling. One man, Peter, is talking to me about his love of the countryside. A minute later he tells me, matter-of-factly, that the previous week he was temporarily unable to remember his wife's name.

"It can be very isolating," says another man, Roger. His partner is now in a care home but he still organises these

walk-and-talk sessions, seven times a year, on behalf of the charity Young Dementia UK. "You can feel trapped at home, so it's hugely important to get out and do things like this."

I notice, more than I ever have done, how fluid a group walk is, with people splitting off into twos and threes then very naturally reshuffling themselves to start fresh conversations. Walking leads to talking. I also find it a salutary reminder that a walk – any walk – is primarily about appreciating the moment.

YoungDementia UK is a charity that provides information and support to people whose lives are affected by young onset dementia.

[youngdementiauk.org](http://youngdementiauk.org)



Nigel, Val, John and Pat meeting dogs



## DON'T BREAK A LEG TAKE A BREAK

Efficient, stable and durable. Lite+ is a compact all-in-one stove optimized for coffee breaks and solo trips. Also available in XL and Lite.

**KEEP THE FLAME BURNING**

**PRIMUS®**

[www.primus.eu](http://www.primus.eu)

For stockists contact: [sales@rosker.co.uk](mailto:sales@rosker.co.uk)



## Montane

### Hi-Q Luxe Jacket

This jacket is filled with a new Primaloft material called Gold Luxe. It's a fully synthetic insulation that is designed to replicate down. As a result it is warm and packable, but will still insulate when warm. The Hi-Q Luxe has a Pertex Quantum windproof layer and a good hood for underneath a helmet.

[montane.co.uk](http://montane.co.uk)



## OMM

### Sleeping System

One of the most interesting products of the show was the half sleeping bag from OMM, the Original Mountain Marathon. The half-bag, featuring Primaloft Gold synthetic insulation, can be attached to the Mountain Raid jacket for a super lightweight quick sleeping system.

[theomm.com](http://theomm.com)



## Keen

### Liberty Ridge

The Liberty Ridge is part of Keen's new hiking collection and made exclusively in Europe. It's made from a single piece of full-grain leather and has the KEEN.DRY membrane. Its direct-injection PU midsole will also last really well. Expect the trademark Keen comfort.

[keenfootwear.com](http://keenfootwear.com)



## Marmot

### Headwall Jacket

The Headwall Jacket is part of an interesting new range from Marmot. This insulated jacket uses the new Primaloft Silver Insulation – a lightweight and breathable synthetic insulation. The shell fabric is Marmot's very breathable NanoPro MemBrain waterproof material. Pictured is the women's version.

[marmot.com](http://marmot.com)



## New trends in gear

ISPO is a huge event for the outdoor industry. Hundreds of brands head to the 16 vast halls in Munich to show off their latest gear and innovations for autumn/winter 2015. Daniel Neilson went there to pick out the highlights



## Berghaus

### Baffin Island Jacket

After Hydroloft and Hydrodown, Berghaus have launched a new waterproof fabric named, you've guessed it, Hydrosheal. Pictured is the Baffin Island Jacket that uses the lighter Hydrosheal 'Air' in the heat zones and a thicker 'Elite Pro' elsewhere.

[berghaus.com](http://berghaus.com)



## Primaloft

### Silver Insulation Active

Pictured here in a new Montane running top, the Fireball Verso Pull-on, this new Primaloft is designed for active use and is the brand's most breathable synthetic insulation to date. I'd expect to see it used in a lot of products next winter.

[primaloft.com](http://primaloft.com)



## Osprey

### Ultralight Stuff Pack

As part of a new, expanded accessory range, Osprey have launched the Ultralight Stuff Pack. It's the sort of kit that may not be too sexy, but quickly becomes indispensable. It weighs a mere 90g and packs into a tiny apple-sized case. £25. Kind of excited by this.

[ospreyeurope.com](http://ospreyeurope.com)



## Polartec

### Power Wool

A new material for Polartec is Power Wool. It is a two-layer textile with wool against the skin and a synthetic outer. The wool is naturally odour resistant and warm, while the outer wicks well and also reduces shrinkage. Pictured is Mammut's use for it.

[polartec.com](http://polartec.com)



## Fjällräven Keb Eco-Shell

This is a new sustainable hardshell from Fjällräven, although it's best known for its G-1000 polycotton that can be waxed. The three-layer waterproof material is made partly from recycled polyester and is fully recyclable. The Keb Eco-Shell was very well tailored and the Eco-Shell material was soft, not crinkly at all and with a little bit of stretch. A large weighs 570g. There's also a smock version and waterproof trousers.  
[fjallraven.co.uk](http://fjallraven.co.uk)



## OMM Extreme Food

Also from OMM is a new series of dried food that claims to have the lowest weight to highest calorie ratio on the market. It also has the lowest profile of any dried food packet. Each main course packs 500 calories, and there are nine to choose from. There are also three starters and three desserts. There's also a range of 'Ultra Fuel' that is a food replacement liquid. Oh, and it has a scratch and sniff label. Cool.  
[theomm.com](http://theomm.com)



## Millican Smith the Roll Pack

Millican is a wonderful company based in the Lake District that makes gorgeous bags, backpacks and camera bags. The attention to detail is astonishing and these are the sort of bags that will last an age. New from March 2015 is a more technical and lighter weight range – perfect for the fells.  
[homeofmillican.com](http://homeofmillican.com)



## Páramo Alta 3

After a decade, Páramo have updated their classic Alta hillwalking jacket. Nice new features include a lockable zip, less obtrusive vents, and a mesh back that bellows out the air leading to better ventilation. The hood is excellent and doesn't impinge on glasses or goggles. Out autumn 2015.  
[paramo.co.uk](http://paramo.co.uk)

# MAKE YOUR GoPro® GO LONGER.



## ALL DAY

GoPro® Hero 3+™  
high capacity power supply

Can also be used to charge your smartphone and other adventure accessories.



SMART PHONE  
2X

VIDEO GAME  
2X

GPS  
3X

\*Made to only be used with GoPro's Hero3+ camera  
\*GOPRO®, HERO®, the GOPRO® logo and the GOPRO®  
Be a Hero logo are trademarks or registered trademarks  
of GOPRO®, Inc.



**BRUNTON**



# Cast your vote!

The Great Outdoors has teamed up with the European Outdoor Conservation Association (EOCA) in order that you, our readers, can help choose a conservation project worthy of funding in 2015

EOCA IS A CONSERVATION ORGANISATION made up from an ever expanding group of outdoor brands and retailers within the European outdoor industry, formed to raise money to put directly into conservation projects worldwide. With membership now at 122 companies, EOCA has since its inception in 2006 raised over €1.5 million for conservation, and funded 64 projects in 36 different countries. One hundred per cent of all monies raised by the organisation go directly to the conservation projects chosen by its members and the general public.

Conservation organisations can apply for up to €30,000 for specific projects. EOCA then assess all of the applications and produces a

shortlist of the most worthwhile projects that most closely meet their requirements. EOCA would now like you to help choose one of the projects from the shortlist for it to fund this year.

All you have to do is go online at: [tgomagazine.co.uk](http://tgomagazine.co.uk) or [outdoorconservation.eu](http://outdoorconservation.eu) any time between March 9 and 23, read each of the proposed projects and cast your vote for your favourite project. The project which receives the most votes will get the funding it has requested from EOCA. The result will be announced once all of the votes have been counted and verified.

You can find out more about EOCA and the conservation projects it has already supported at [outdoorconservation.eu](http://outdoorconservation.eu)



1

## Citizen Action for Tigers (CAT), Malaysia

**Nominated by:** Chrissy Dorn

Malaysian Conservation Alliance for Tigers (MYCAT) is an alliance of four NGOs working to save Malaysia's tigers. CAT is the first programme in Malaysia that enables the public to get involved in tiger conservation. CAT Walks (anti-poaching wilderness watches) bring small groups trekking or camping in the rainforests of the Yu River Wildlife Corridor, the sole link between Malaysia's two largest forested areas. Together, they form the world's fifth-largest tiger landscape (35,000 sq. km). Volunteers look out for signs of poachers, snares, as well as tigers, elephants, sambar deer and other wildlife. Snares and traps found are recorded, deactivated and reported to the authorities. CAT Walkers also check camera traps to monitor wildlife. As a continual presence in the area is required to deter poaching, this project will run two scheduled weekend walks every month. Trips are led by trained and experienced leaders, and some are guided by indigenous Batek people who will teach volunteers the art of foraging and animal tracking. CAT helps increase tiger and sambar populations, the Batek's chance of preserving their traditional hunter-gatherer culture, local ecotourism opportunities; and is a unique experience for outdoor enthusiasts.

[citizenactionfortigers.my](http://citizenactionfortigers.my)

2

## Love Hill Mangrove Restoration, Bahamas

**Nominated by:** Snugpak

Andros is characterised by mangrove estuaries. These are important nursery, feeding and refuge habitats for fish, birds, turtles, sea mammals and invertebrates, all vital for cleaning algae which settles on the Andros Barrier Reef; the third longest barrier reef in the world. Mangroves are vitally important to the overall health of an entire ecosystem, they represent a significant carbon sink and provide protection to coasts from storms and climate change. When three causeways were built across the Love Hill mangroves over 50 years ago, some culverts were installed to maintain water flow. These however are now broken or clogged, and where no culverts were built, the mangroves are only nourished during high tides when water floods over the causeway. This has resulted in a degraded mangrove area. It is encroached by the invasive casuarina pine, clogged with marine litter, smelling of methane and seriously degraded as a habitat. This project will restore and enhance tidal flow and therefore habitat in 96 square hectares of mangrove, by cleaning out, repairing and installing new culverts on all three causeways, and by replacing invasive pines with native species. By restoring the mangrove habitat, the fish populations in the open ocean and the health of the barrier reef will also be improved. Love Hill, Andros will be restored as an attractive area to explore, bird watch, kayak, swim and walk.

[ancat.net](http://ancat.net)

3

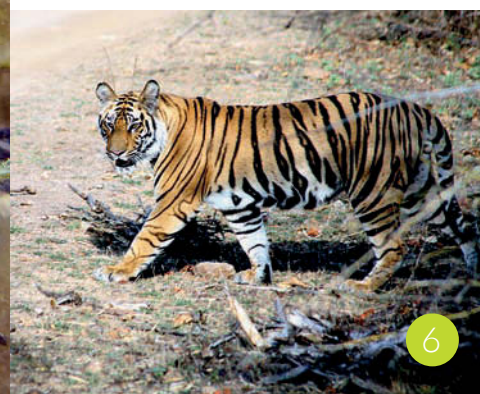
## Promoting appreciation and stewardship of the Ankarabolava-Agnakatrika Forest among local teenagers, Madagascar

**Nominated by:** European Outdoor Group

The Ankarabolava-Agnakatrika in south eastern Madagascar is of exceptional importance because it is the last fragment of native evergreen forest in the area, covering 1574 hectares. It provides habitat to a diverse flora and fauna that includes several threatened species and it is also an important source of natural goods and services for local people. However, due to shifting cultivation, exploitation of timber and wildfires, much of the forest has been lost over the last two decades. Missouri Botanical Garden's Madagascar Research and Conservation Programme has supported a community based conservation project since 2009, aiming to conserve the site by promoting its sustainable use by local people. While the conservation strategy recognises the economic importance of the forest it also aims to add value to the forest as a place of recreation and spiritual renewal for local people. With that in mind, this project will host nature camps in the forest for 500 young people during which they will participate in recreational activities and also contribute to the restoration of abandoned agricultural plots in the forest by planting 10,000 tree seedlings produced by a project-funded tree nursery.

[missouribotanicalgarden.org](http://missouribotanicalgarden.org)





4

### Seahorse and Seagrass Project, UK

**Nominated by:** OutDoor

The project plans to work with partners in the outdoor community, conservation bodies and authorities, to ensure the designation and implementation of a Marine Conservation Zone at South Beach, Studland Bay in Dorset. The bay is home to a seagrass meadow, one of the most important ecosystems inshore in the UK. It is important for the wildlife it provides ecosystem for including the spiny seahorse, and its role in preventing erosion of the seabed and cliffs through its lessening of the wave energy. Seagrass meadows are under threat here however due, in particular, to the large number of boats visiting the bay and dropping anchor. These anchors drag up the seagrass and damage the habitat. This project will gather vital information about the seagrass and its dependent species, carry out seagrass restoration work and, through the setting up of the Marine Conservation Zone, educate others about the importance of seagrass meadows, using seahorses as the flagship species. The project also aims to push for the setting up and trialing of environmentally friendly moorings to enable boats to visit without causing damage from dropping harmful anchors.

[theseahorsetrust.org](http://theseahorsetrust.org)

5

### Mangrove Conservation and Eco Tourism, Madagascar

**Nominated by:** Schoeffel

Mangrove forests play a key role in mitigating against climate change, through their role as a carbon sink and in the vast range of ecosystem services they provide. In the tropics and subtropics, these marine forests are critical to the wellbeing of coastal communities, yet they are threatened by deforestation, primarily for timber and charcoal production. Blue Ventures Conservation is an international marine conservation organisation working in partnership with coastal communities in places where the ocean is vital to coastal cultures and economies. During this project, the organisation will introduce ecotourism to a coastal mangrove community in order to reduce pressure on the mangroves and provide alternative sources of income to local communities there. In conjunction with a local eco tourism operator, training will be given to guides for kayak tours and local women for meal preparation. Boardwalks, viewing towers and signage will be built for people to explore the mangroves without causing any damage to the unique environment. A percentage of the earnings from the tours will go to two community based mangrove management associations that are charged with enforcing sustainable mangrove management laws through patrols and the implementation of sustainable extraction quotes.

[blueventures.org](http://blueventures.org)

6

### Community based conservation of tiger habitat in the buffer zone of the Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve, India

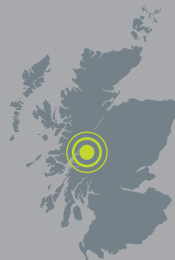
**Nominated by:** Bergans of Norway

More than half of the wild tiger's worldwide population is found in India's 47 tiger reserves, including the famous Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve. Over 100,000 visitors annually come to Bandhavgarh to see them. The buffer zone around the reserve keeps the pressures of local communities away from critical tiger habitat and provides habitat to 'spill over' tigers from the core zones. However, forest resources here are under immense pressure from overgrazing and overharvesting, which has led to the spread of invasive plant species and degradation of habitat. Littering of non-biodegradable waste by visitors is also a problem. This project will encourage cattle stall-feeding and construct ten biogas plants and 100 energy efficient stoves to reduce the need for firewood and control grazing. Water holes will be created in the forest so that tigers and other wildlife have access to water in dry periods, keeping them away from human habitation, so minimising human conflict. Invasive species such as Lantana will be removed from 125 ha and responsible tourism will be promoted by creating a three km trail with 20 information boards and the installation of rubbish bins.

[corbettfoundation.org](http://corbettfoundation.org)



△ Aonach Eagach ridge  
Day walk & scrambling



# NORTHERN EXPOSURE

The Aonach Eagach is one of Britain's best scrambling days out, but it shouldn't be underestimated.

*Hanna Lindon* takes an exciting journey along the Grade 2 ridge



▲ A well-beaten path makes navigating the ridge straightforward

IT'S TWO HOURS BEFORE DAWN and I'm lying awake in the darkness, listening to the midges bouncing off the sides of the tent like crazy, bitey tennis balls. Somewhere out there, beyond the coarse sepia grasses of Rannoch Moor and the hunched backs of Glencoe's southern sentry peaks, is the root of my insomnia: a three kilometre-long volcanic tightrope walk known variously to the mountain-loving fraternity as 'the best day out in Scotland', 'Britain's second-hardest ridge walk' and 'that tricky bugger'. Later today I'll be scrambling the Aonach Eagach – and, to be completely frank with you, I'm pant-wettingly terrified.

The trouble with the pinnacled bridge of rock that links the Munros of Meall Dearg and Sgorr nam Fiannaidh is that it's wrapped in a pea-souper of rumour, speculation and split opinion. Some say that you need climbing know-how to attempt it; others that anybody with a good head for heights can skedaddle ➔





The Crazy Pinnacles –  
as hair-raising as their  
name suggests





across. Even the guidebooks seem reluctant to deal in definitives – they call it ‘probably’ the narrowest ridge on the Scottish mainland and ‘possibly’ the most challenging horizontal scramble in the country. Well, come on! Is it or isn’t it? Call me a control freak, but when it comes to mammoth mountain days I like to know what I’m getting myself into.

Guy, my chilled-out other half, has no truck with metaphysical uncertainty. His contented snores are still mingling with the pitter-patter of the midgie army’s assault when the alarm goes off at 6am. Outside the tent, the mountains are the misty blue of wood smoke and a preternatural hush hangs over the dawn landscape. Mist coils around the sweeping curves of the A82 as we bundle our dewy belongings quickly into the car and rumble off towards the heart of the pass.

“This is the most beautiful road in the country,” says Guy, craning out of the window at the Scandinavian silhouette of Buachaille Etive Mor. “You know what would make it even better?”

“What?”

“If I was driving a DB-5 right now.”

I roll my eyes in age-old wifely fashion. “You’ve been watching too much James Bond. Personally, I reckon it’d be far better if the road didn’t exist and you had to walk in.”

I would, too. Glencoe to my mind is far too special to be so universally accessible. When tourers pull up at the side of the road and snap photos of those awesomely conical mountains through their motorhome windows, I feel like a jealous husband desperate to guard his beautiful wife from the goggling eyes of other men. “Go home!” I want to shout at them. “Or at least show a bit of respect to the scenery and get out of your damn vehicle!”

There’s a family posing for selfies in front of their car as we park on the bend just before Allt-na-reigh and don our scrambling boots. One of the only decent routes to the top snakes up from this corner car park, which is tucked into the mountainside just a little way beyond a white house. It only takes a few minutes of tramping up the narrow but well-constructed path before the foghorn voices of the selfie-taking tourists have faded to whispers on the breeze. Behind us the landscape is scrunched up like so much geological origami; the triple summits of the Three Sisters swelling up from the road and beyond them the distant Munro of Bidean nam Biathe.

## Into the Hidden Valley

Somewhere in there, concealed even from this elevation, is the Lost Valley, Coire Gabhail, where legend says the MacDonalds used to hide the cattle they’d rustled from neighbouring clans. In the last years of the 17th century, MacDonalds were killed in a massacre orchestrated by the English and the lowland clans. The Redcoats lived off the locals’ hospitality for nearly two weeks before slaughtering dozens of them and driving many others up into the mountains to die of exposure – making this one of the most shameful episodes in the centuries of conflict between England and Scotland. Just in case the landscape harbours any resentment against the duplicitous English, I’ve taken the precaution of wearing a Buff in the colours of the Welsh flag. Anything to avoid antagonising the capricious ridge that lurks just beyond the summit of Am Bodach.

The puff up to that 943-metre point is sweetly short, leavened by the glorious views and the anticipation of what’s to come. We emerge on the rocky top of the mountain fizzing with excitement – ready for just about anything. At almost exactly the same time the sun slides out from behind its misty veil and there’s the ridge in the distance, hung like sheets on a washing line between the tall poles of Meall Dearg, Stob Coire Leath and Sgorr nam Fiannaidh. Eddies of clouds swirl around its spiny pinnacles and cascade down its scree-covered sides. It is, in a word, knockout.

“Stunning,” I say to Guy, spirits suddenly buoyed. “I like the look of this.”

We’ve brought a rope, just in case, but my gut feeling now we’re up here is that we won’t need it – not yet, at least. I scramble eagerly down the scrambly descent from Am Bodach, head spinning deliciously from the exposure, last night’s intestine-twisting fears forgotten. This aperitif to the main ridge is called ‘the Chancellor’ on the map (although some hill folk use this name for the rocky surf board that protrudes out of the side of Am Bodach). It’s dank and slippery in parts, with an imposing drop below, but the technical difficulties are only moderate. That’s why I’m surprised to look back and see Guy rooted to a shallow platform, looking tenser than I’ve seen him in a long while.

“What’s up?” I shout.

“It’s just...really exposed,” he mutters, scanning the rock for an easy way down. His bag is heavy, weighed down by the rope and a



▲ The ridge teeters above Glen Coe with the road and the River Coe just visible in the background

▶ The views across to the Three Sisters are mesmerising

**IT'S WRAPPED IN  
A PEA-SOUP  
OF RUMOUR,  
SPECULATION  
AND SPLIT  
OPINION**





small climbing rack, and I can see it knocking him off balance as he scrambles awkwardly down the face. By the time he gets to me, his palms are sweating and there's just the suggestion of a tremble in his legs. This is pretty much the first time I've ever seen Guy scared by a mountain, and it's puzzling. Was the exposure really that bad? It didn't seem so to me, but maybe the adrenaline had made me slapdash.

Then we spot a couple of chaps in full-on mountain gear scrambling down behind us. They both look competent – but one beetles his way through the twists and turns of the down climb assuredly while the other one keeps casting nervous glances down to his right. Like Guy, he's shiny-faced and puffing when they catch us up.

"I did the Cuillin Ridge earlier this year," he confides as they pass. "But that descent was

just... I don't know. It felt a lot more dangerous."

"It was fine," says his mate. "Can't think what you were stressing about."

Perhaps this, I think, is the secret behind Aonach Eagach's enigmatic reputation. Maybe it appears in different ways to different eyes, like some kind of psychedelic optical illusion. The grade 2 designation reflects some reasonably serious technical difficulties, but a traverse of the ridge is a test of skill and a test of the nerves. And you'd better be pretty sure that you're up to the challenge, because between the Chancellor and the final Munro there really are no safe descent routes.

Navigationally, I'd go so far as to say that it's a doddle in good conditions. A clearly beaten path wiggles away from Am Bodach and rises in leisurely loops to the 953-metre summit of Meall Dearg. In the distant north, Ben



## "A DROP OF RAIN AND THIS WOULD HAVE BEEN A TOTALLY DIFFERENT RIDGE. WOULDN'T FANCY DOING IT IN A HIGH WIND EITHER"

Nevis rears up behind Garbh Bheinn and the Ring of Steall. Look the other way and you'll see the ribbon of a river wiggling into Loch Achtriochtan with the sugarloaf shape of Stob Coire nan Lochan beyond. As views go, it doesn't get much more dramatic than this.

I've read about scramblers on Aonach Eagach getting caught behind a string of ten roped-up fat blokes, but nothing like that occurs to blight our day. On the summit of Meall Dearg we meet a crazy fell running chap in trainers who tells us that he did the ridge a few months ago in full winter conditions – a far more serious proposition. "Everyone seems to walk it east to west like you," he says, "But I always go west to east. The ascent is harder, true, but the scrambling's definitely better this way and you get an easy path down at the end."

The only other person we meet all day is a cheerful Royal Marine on his bi-annual Scottish holiday. He last walked the ridge twenty years ago as part of a training exercise – and he did it at night.

"A wee bit different that was," he says, as he overtakes us on the scramble down from Meall Dearg. "Nice to have the views this time."

### Don't look down

After the Munro top, things get really interesting. We're onto the main section of the Aonach Eagach ridge now, and the ground below our feet suddenly erupts in a profusion of pinnacles – some slender as stalagmites, others with a botched, bulky look, like lumps of Play-Doh thrown down from on high by the gods. It's tempting to avoid the scrumbly top route and follow the sheep tracks that appear to circumnavigate the pinnacles, but many of these crumble over horror movie drops or run into dead ends. My advice: stick to the crest of the ridge where you can and whatever you do don't look down. Take extreme care, too, as this is where the most serious accidents on Aonach Eagach have occurred in the past.

This pinnacular playground culminates in a fabulously exposed scramble round two jutting nibs of rock (the Crazy Pinnacles), which might justify the use of a rope if you're feeling wobbly. A slightly hairy down climb and the trickiest bit is over – too soon to our minds, but at least there's a nice spot for lunch in the sheltered dip beneath Stob Coire Leith.

"We've been seriously lucky with the weather," Guy points out, as we settle down for a celebratory feast. "A drop of rain and

this would have been a totally different ridge. Wouldn't fancy doing it in a high wind either."

"Yeah – although a bit of a breeze might have kept these damn midges off."

The rest of the walk is relatively plain sailing, but that doesn't detract from the fun factor. After a stiff climb up to Stob Coire Leith the narrow path winds gently across to the summit of Sgorr nam Fiannaidh, the highest point of the day at 967 metres and the last chance to quaff those glorious views back over the ridge before your vantage point swings towards Glencoe. There's a steep gully slicing through the mountain on the left here that some walkers use as a way down to the Clachaig Inn. I wouldn't bother. Even this famous pub's ale selection isn't worth a broken neck. Instead, we bear right and eke out an arduous but relatively safe two-hour descent down the west side of the mountain, eventually joining the road a couple of kilometres northwest of the inn. The whole thing has taken us around seven hours.

"How would you feel..." I begin hopefully as we reach the lane.

"If you wait in the pub and I walk back to get the car?" Guy finishes without looking round.

"I'd buy you a drink."

"Oh come on, don't be so lazy. You can do it."

That's the disadvantage of linear ridge walks of course. Your endorphin supply runs on overdrive until halfway through the descent, when it recedes abruptly and leaves you battling a serious scrambling hangover. Blisters throbbing, thighs groaning, feeling grumpy as hell, we begin the seven-kilometre tramp back towards the car. Neither of us even bother to look up when a grey Citroën motors past, turns around abruptly and then pulls up behind us.

"Hey – you two!" somebody shouts.

"Want a lift back to your car?"

It's the Royal Marine who passed us earlier on the ridge. He's on his way back to the Red Squirrel campsite after a pint at the Clachaig, but this golden-hearted chap took one look at our gloomy faces and decided to do us a favour. Ten minutes later we're back in the car park; and in my golden state of post-walk bliss, even the selfie-snapping tourists don't bug me.

"If anybody asks how our day went I'm going to tell them we got rescued by the marines," says Guy, waving at our champion as he roars off down the road.

"That's going to make the ridge seem even more of an enigma," I say, and decide all of a sudden that Aonach Eagach's cloak of mystery is probably what makes it so appealing. Maybe a touch of uncertainty is no bad thing after all. 🟩



- ▲ This tricky chimney is one of the best scrambles of the day
- ▶ The narrowest and most exposed section of the Aonach Eagach
- ▼ Watch out for fast-descending cloud, which can scupper visibility







## SCRAMBLE IT YOURSELF

### Park

The path starts from the small car park at grid reference NN173567. A larger car park is just a short tramp down the road if this one is full.

### Sleep

We camped at Glencoe Mountain Resort ([glencoe mountain.co.uk](http://glencoe mountain.co.uk)), which is a smidgeon over-commercialised but a steal at just £6 per person. The Red Squirrel Campsite ([redsquirrelcampsite.co.uk](http://redsquirrelcampsite.co.uk)) is better placed for the ridge and oozes rustic charm at every pore, but it is £10 for one night.

### Eat

The Clachaig Inn ([clachaig.com](http://clachaig.com)) was a TGO award winner in 2013 and combines a cosy atmosphere with fabulous food and beer.

### Map

Harveys Superwalker XT25; OS Explorer 384.

### Guidebook

Classic Mountain Scrambles in Scotland by Andrew Dempster (ISBN 1851584781) contains a good description of the route.

### Grade

Officially a grade 2 scramble, Aonach Eagach is at the lower

end of its grade in terms of technicality but scores high on the exposure front. In winter the ridge is a 3\* grade 2 winter climb and a different beast altogether.

### Equipment

If you are confident scrambling up to grade 2 and have a good head for heights then a pair of stout scrambling boots should serve you just fine. A rope and harnesses may be needed if you have beginners or less confident scramblers in your train. Full winter climbing gear is essential if you're contemplating doing Aonach Eagach in winter conditions.



# The Great Outdoors

**The Great Outdoors** will help you access the high peaks and long trails of Britain and beyond, with up-to-date information on the very latest gear, expert tips, in-depth features and stunning photography.

**26 ISSUES**  
**FOR £79.95**

+ **FREE** Paramo Fuera  
Windproof Unisex Smock

Ideal for: Climbing, Scrambling, Backpacking,  
Hill-walking, Running, Mountain-Biking, Adventure  
Racing and Trek & Travel activities.



Promotion code  
**TGOSMOCK15**

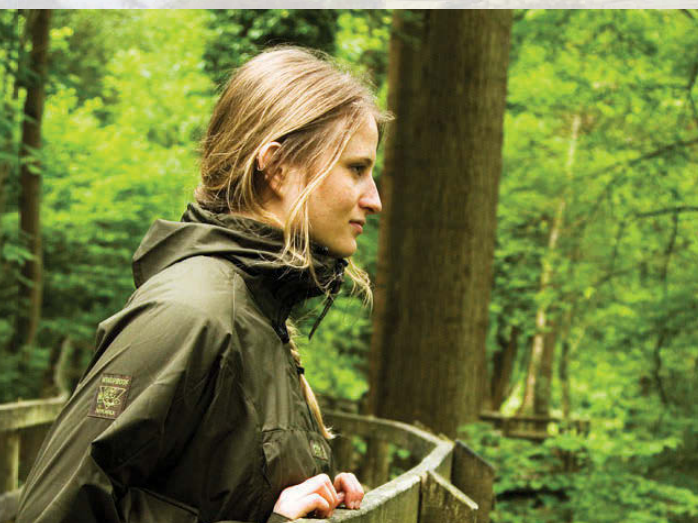


Worth **£55**

Sizes: **XS\*** | **S** | **M** | **L** | **XL** | **XXL**

\*Black only

Available in  
3 colours





# 13 ISSUES FOR **£44.95**

+ **FREE** SIGG Hot & Cold Flask

Designed for performance, the sleek and contemporary new SIGG Hot & Cold range is reminiscent of the iconic SIGG shape. Entirely designed and engineered in Switzerland, all double-walled vacuum insulated flasks are manufactured from high-quality, food safe 18/8 stainless steel.

Available in four colours:

**Black | Silver | Red | Green**

0.5 L



Worth **£23**



Promotion code  
**TGOSIGG15**

## Terms & Conditions:

This offer is only available for new subscribers to The Great Outdoors print magazine. Subscribe for 1 year and receive a free SIGG Hot and Cold Flask. Subscribe for 2 years and receive a Free Paramo Fuera Windproof Smock (Unisex). Two separate offers. TGO accepts no responsibility for any damage, loss, liabilities or disappointment incurred or suffered by a customer as a result of claiming the offer. If the subscription that you purchased includes a free gift, please allow up to 4 weeks for delivery. Gifts are sent out separately to your subscription copy of the magazine. For all enquiries email: [tgo@escosubs.co.uk](mailto:tgo@escosubs.co.uk) or call **+44 (0) 1371 851 867**. The promotion will have an expiry date of 30th May 2015. Offer available whilst stocks last.

**TO SUBSCRIBE**

📞 **01371 851 867**

Quote the **promotion code** found on the offer



[WWW.TGOMAGAZINE.CO.UK/SPRINGGIFTS](http://WWW.TGOMAGAZINE.CO.UK/SPRINGGIFTS)

Enter the **promotion code** quoted on the offer

# Spring subscription GIFTS



Whether it's Scafell or the Walker Spur, for a bit of nastiness and drama north faces are the way to go

# THE SIX GREAT NORTH FACES OF...

# IT TAKES






THE EIGER, THE MATTERHORN, THE DRU and Piz Badile; the Grandes Jorasses and the Cima Grande. If you're a serious Alpine type, what you want are the six great north faces.

North faces are nasty. They're bleak, they're steep, and they hold their snow. The storms are stormier, there's dirty old ice even in midsummer, and every afternoon they turn into waterfalls, stonefalls and avalanche. They've made one of the great

mountain books (*Starlight and Storm* by Gaston Rébuffat) and formed the first act in the tragedy that was Alison Hargreaves.

Old-style alpinists stuck to the airy ridgelines, and so do walkers in the English Lakes. But sometimes it's fun to be a steely-eyed, monkey-bearded, rock-hard alpine man or lass. Moss and loose rock; waterfalls and no particular path; steepness and scree. Whether it's Pillar or Piz Badile, for a bit of mountain nastiness, you need to be on a north face. 

# PLANET

Across Bowfell's north face  
from high on the Band





## Pillar North Face

**Slightly similar to:** Grandes Jorasses 4208m

**Because:** The Walker Spur (Grandes Jorasses) and Walker's Gully (Pillar) are neither of them places for walkers

**North Face nastiness:** steep, rocky ground with a faint path lower down, clearer above; rock underfoot on Shamrock Traverse. The side-trip to Pisgah rock is a short scramble Grade 1.

The Grandes Jorasses, below Mont Blanc, form a north wall one km wide and 1,200m high. R buffat was blown away not just by its granite and icy avalanche couloirs – but because of its beauty. “Solid yet shapely, it has grace despite its bulk. Its crest is half way to heaven. It is a living thing.”

The Lakeland version has to be the grand north face of Pillar, rising above Ennerdale in a jumble of rocks, waterfalls and hanging birch trees. Small crags give way to bigger ones, the wide slab of the Shamrock Buttress, and the magnificence of Pillar Rock.

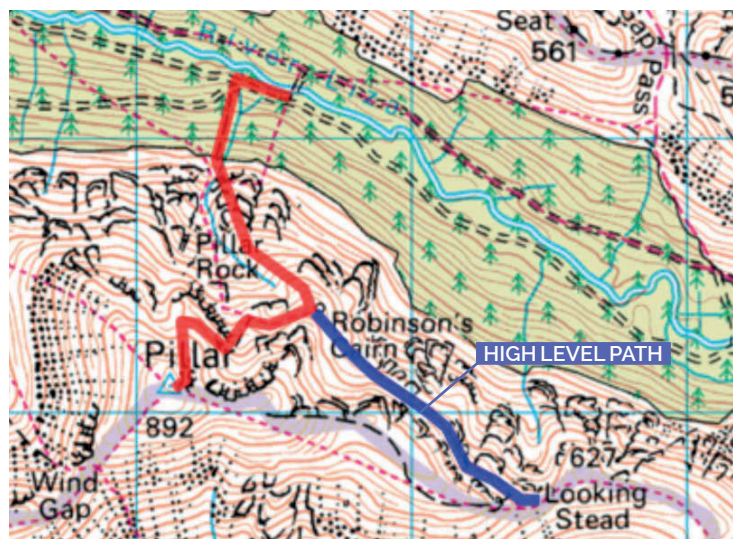
The finest line on the Jorasses is the Walker Spur; steep, rough granite interrupted by sheets of ice, leading like an arrow to the mountain's true summit. Pillar has a serious ascent as well: Grade 3 scrambling by the West Waterfall and Pillar Rock's top. For her 1993

achievement of the ‘Big Six’ in a single summer, Alison Hargreaves chose the less formidable Central Spur. Free of sponsorship or self-promotion, walkers too can take an easier, climb-free line up Pillar.

### Pillar North Face: Route


From the Liza footbridge (NY175131) take a forest track west 200m, then fork up left in another 200m. A small path runs up beside a stream, then up a spur southeast to Robinson's Cairn. Here join the High-Level Path, and follow it right, into Pillar Cove, then up scree to left of the Shamrock Crag. The Shamrock Traverse slants up to the right, a sloping ledge of bare rock, to reach the col behind Pillar Rock.

The first, lower summit, called Pisgah, is an airy Grade 1 scramble. Return to the col, and head straight up the main mountain.



Reaching Pillar Rock  
on the High Level Path



 Dalehead old mine building, above Newlands

## Dale Head North Face

Slightly similar to:

Piz Badile 3308m

**Because:** they're both minor mountains with better routes than they deserve

**North Face nastiness:** small but good path all the way

Rising from the woods of Bregaglia valley, Piz Badile offers a north face that's a slab of granite 1,000m high. There's a line of climbable corners, discovered by the great Riccardo Cassin. Rébuffat "marvelled at the audacity of such a route... the climbing airy as you could wish". Dale Head, a triangle of scree and scrappy rock blocking off the head of Newlands, has its own 'audacious line'; one caused by copper miners rather than the great Cassin.


To undertake these Lakeland faces as two-day expeditions would be bonkers. None of them is more than a three-hour ascent. But then... walking up Scafell Pike is pointless. So why not drop one letter: and (just for the L of it) turn walking up to waking up. As Rébuffat says: "The man who bivouacs becomes one with the mountain. On his bed of stone, leaning against the great wall... facing empty space which has become his friend, he watches the stars and sleeps again."

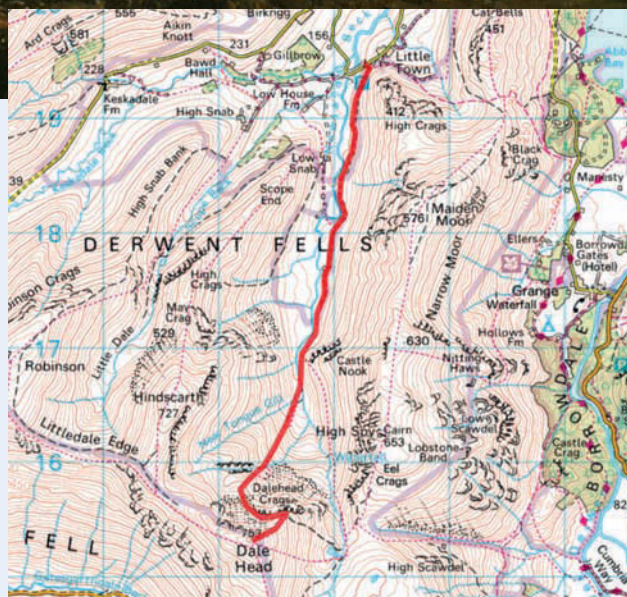
In the hollow below Dale Head's upper scree there's a ruined mine building, and a tiny stream. As night falls you watch the colours change on the face of Skiddaw, six miles away; listen to the breeze, and the tinkle of the stream. In the morning, find the faint way up into the scree, and slant up the path a footfall wide, to an exciting arrival on the high ridgeline just below the summit.



### Dale Head North Face: Route

Head up Newlands valley track to below Castlenook Crag. Cross the stream at the foot of Near Tongue Gill (NY227166) to the faint green path slanting up southwest. It crosses Far Tongue Gill to the hollow above.

From the ruined mine building, the faint path heads straight uphill into the rocks and scree, then slants away to the left (ignore the map's right-of-way line) to arrive at a slight shoulder (630m) on Dale Head's north-east ridge. 







Skiddaw from  
Bassenthwaite village

## Skiddaw North Face

**Slightly similar to:** The Drus 3754m

**Because:** Skiddaw has a Little Man 216ft lower.

The Dru has a Petit Dru 75ft lower

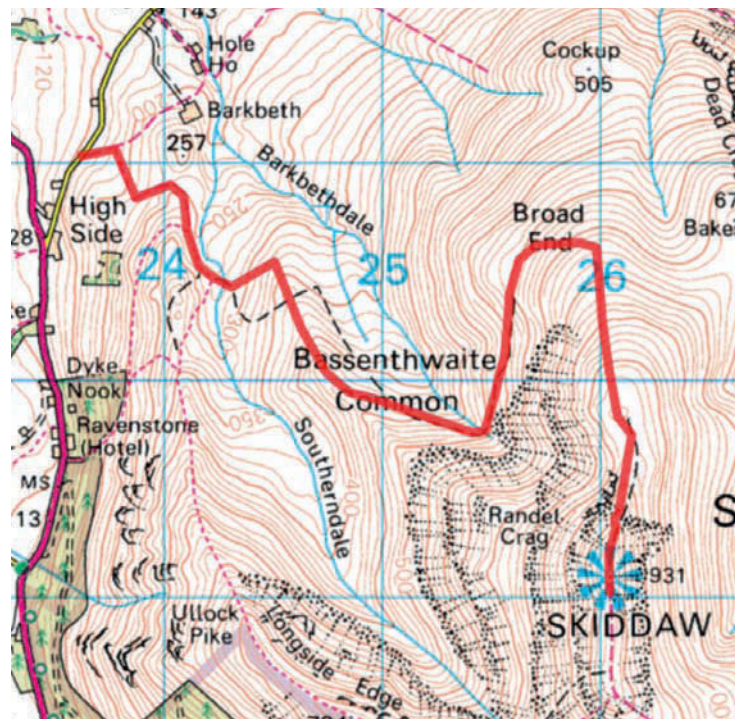
**North Face nastiness:** the grassy path will be hard to trace in mist

Among the Big Six, the Drus are the less difficult one. Rébuffat did it in an afternoon, though an inconvenient snowstorm forced a bivouac and made him late for the Blessing of the Iceaxe in Chamonix next day.

Seen from some angles, Skiddaw has a slightly pointy shape, perhaps one per cent as dramatic as the Drus. Never mind. Its northern slopes of scree and sheep-grass have another hidden path, approached by an untrodden green hollow.

### Skiddaw: Route

A gate above Barkbeth farm (NY241306) leads into Southerndale. Cross a footbridge, and head up the grassy slope to Great Knott. Follow the ridgeline southeast to a col. A path contours left into the head of Barkbethdale and slants up left across the heathery slope of Broad End. Once across the steep heather, the path turns directly uphill, joining a larger one running up to the level shoulder (830m), and the wide path running south to Skiddaw summit.



### Rébuffat in brief

Rébuffat was born in 1921 in Marseilles, and learned to climb on the local limestone, before an inspiring introduction to the high Alps on the Barre des Écrins, aged 17. In 1942 he impressed the Chamonix Guides enough to be allowed

into what had been a closed shop for locals only. Many of his finest climbs, including Piz Badile, were accomplished as guide leading client.

The 'Big Six' were simply the most tough and tempting Alpine routes offered within the techniques

of 1942. It was Rébuffat's *Starlight and Storm* (1954) that converted them into a must-do project, as pursued by Alison Hargreaves (*A Hard Day's Summer* 1994).

Rébuffat was a key member of the small French team that climbed

the first 8,000m peak, Annapurna, in 1950. He did not, however, appreciate the nationalistic fervour around the ascent, preferring the Alps. He writes of the beauty and joy of the climbs, even the most dangerous and uncomfortable ones. He died in 1985.



## Scafell Pike North Face

**Slightly similar to:** Matterhorn 4478m

**Because:** they're both rather big

**North Face nastiness:** one slightly scrumbly bit of path early on; pathless and quite steep above

"This magnificent heap of rubble," Rébuffat calls the Matterhorn; admitting that its 1200m of loose rock held together with glassy ice, unprotected and exposed as it is, can be a bit of a trudge – were it not for the magnificence of the mountain itself. With bits constantly dropping off it, the way up is different every time.

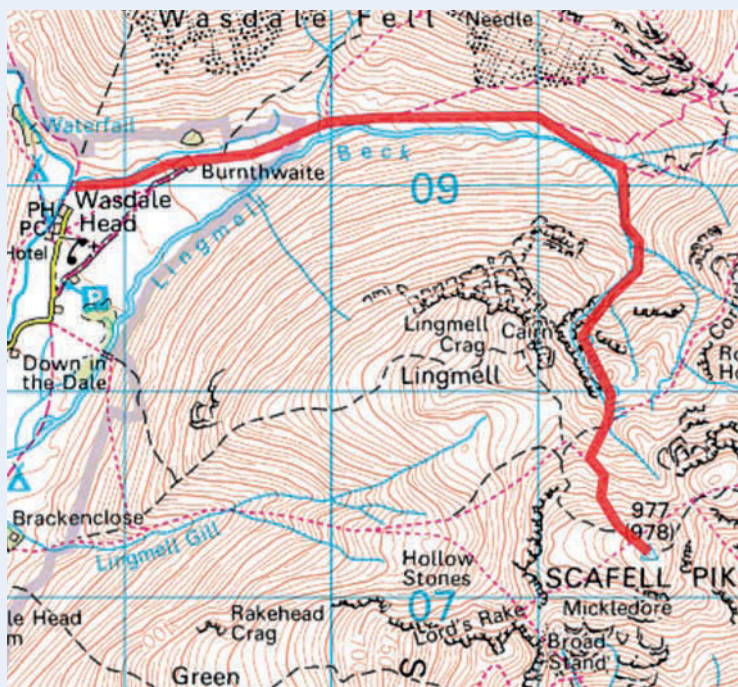
The lower part of Scafell Pike is alongside the chasm of Piers Gill. Here there is a path, broken by a short scrumbly bit, and a 30-second side trip to the tempting Middleboot Knotts. But once across the Corridor path, Scafell Pike becomes a virgin summit – 'virgin' in the sense of being pathless and not mentioned in Wainwright. You could try the fantasy right-of-way inscribed by some imaginative mapmaker. You could try due south and see what happens. Or you could attempt the north face ideal: the line

taken by a drop of water on its way down from the summit.

High up the way is blocked by Dropping Crag. It would spoil things to suggest either particular side of it. The stonefield above could be a Matterhorn-like trudge – were it not for the splendour of Scafell Pike itself, and the satisfaction of arriving from an entirely eccentric direction.

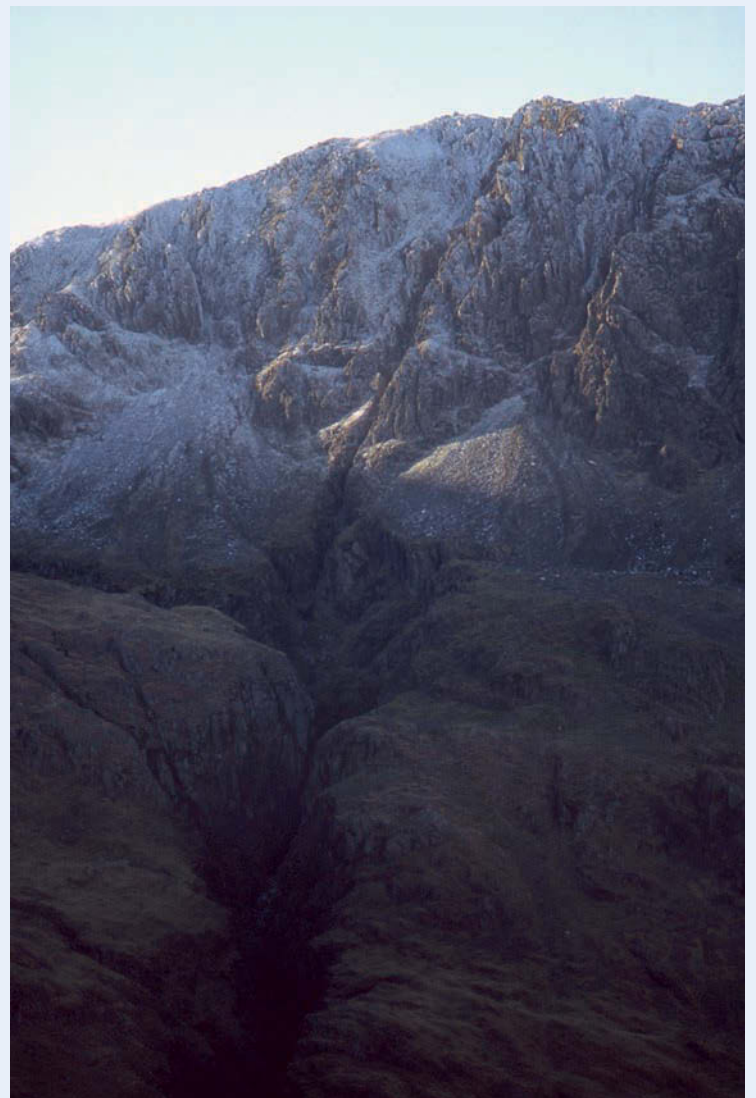
### Scafell Pike: the route

Head up Lingmell Beck to the stream junction below Piers Gill (NY212091). A path runs up to left of the stream and then of the deep gully chasm. At the gill's head, cross the Corridor Path and keep on directly uphill, weaving among small crags. Pass to right of Dropping Crag (or try left if you like). As on the Matterhorn, avoid to the very last step the converging and busy ridgelines on either side. ➡



▲ Across the wide hollow of Scafell Pike's north face, from Seathwaite Fell

▼ The lower part of Scafell Pike's north face: Piers Gill and Lingmell Crag







## Bowfell North Face

**Slightly similar to:** Cima Grande 2999m

**Because:** one huge rocky slab. Well, moderately huge in the case of Bowfell

**North Face nastiness:** narrow path across steep, broken ground: bouldery path above

The Cima Grande is the one among the Big Six that's not actually very big. Its north face appears as a 500m vertical slab of dolomite limestone. This is an illusion. The lower 200m of it are overhanging.

Bowfell's north face route is also a climbers' one; the Climbers' Traverse path to the Bowfell Buttress. They're pretty blasé about the narrowness of their path, but mere walkers will find it exciting enough. It leads into a "sanctuary of soaring summits and dead, fallen stone" – Rébuffat's description of the Dolomites does nicely for Bowfell as well.

Above now, 250 metres of smooth stone, the Great Slab. Instead of 90° plus,

it's a mere 30°, which the brave with good boots can walk straight up. For the rest of us there's a bouldery path alongside.

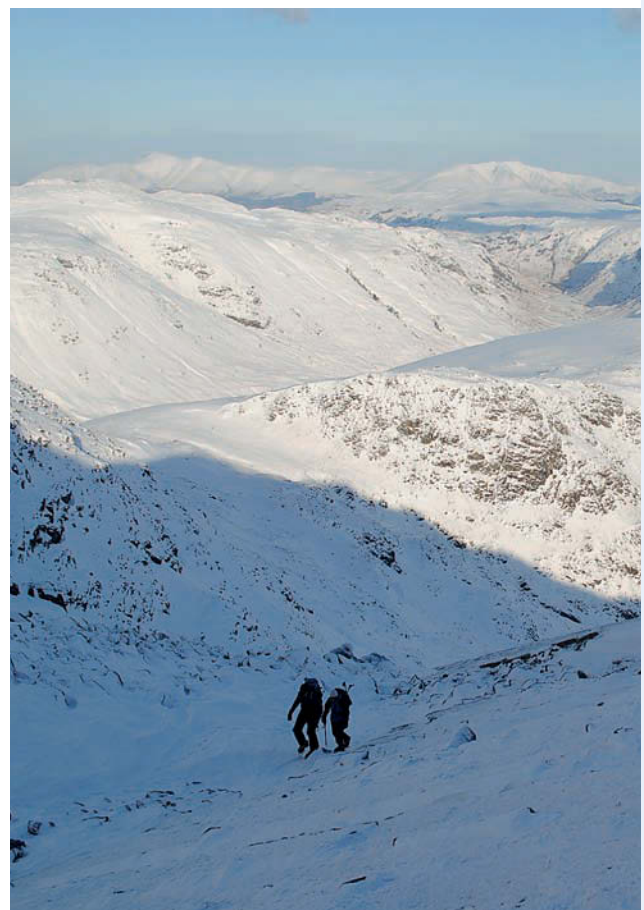
### Bowfell: the route

Head up the Band above Stool End farm. At the 600m mark (NY254062) the main path bears off left but keep on up the crest on a smaller one. After 200m this bends suddenly right, to contour across steep, broken ground. It passes below the toe of Flat Crag into a crag-ringed hollow. Turn up left, on a small path immediately to right of the Great Slab, to Bowfell's plateau.



▲ On Bowfell Climbers' Traverse

▼ Walkers emerging at the top of Bowfell's Great Slab







That North Face feeling:  
Pikes Crag and Scafell

## Scafell North Face

**Slightly similar to:** the Eiger 3970m

**Because:** the Bernese authorities tried to ban the Eiger. The National Trust put up notices telling us to stay out of Lord's Rake

**North Face nastiness:** Lords Rake and Deep Gill gullies are steep and loose, needing care

Huge, unsettling empty spaces below and behind; huge, dark, rock faces above and all around. Across into the heart of the crags leads a little ledge. And people pass this way; the stones fallen from above are kicked apart to form a promising little path. I'm never going to cross the Eiger's Traverse of the Gods but I don't mind. Because I've got the West Wall Traverse on Scafell.

The T of the G leads to the White Spider icefield and the Exit Cracks. The West Wall leads to somewhere nearly as nasty. Deep Ghyll is not just deep but loose, damp and dirty as well.

On the Eiger, stones fall down the three great icefields like shrapnel. Stonefall has not been a serious problem on Lakeland's older and more stable slopes. Except on Scafell... In 2002, frost prised off a 10-foot chunk of the Shamrock Buttress. This now sits poised on a pile of stones, at the top of the Lord's Rake gully. One day,

it's going to come crashing down.

So Scafell's fabulous traverse comes between two gruesome gullies. The Eiger, too, has its unpleasant aspects.

### Scafell: the Route

Above Brackenclose, follow the path up Lingmell Gill to Hollow Stones. A large pathside rock (NY207070) is below the foot of the broad Shamrock Buttress. In another 100m, turn up screes into the Lord's Rake Gully that slants back to the right between the Shamrock and the main Scafell Crag.

At its top, the Lord's Rake faultline continues past the poised boulder to emerge on Scafell's west ridge. But immediately below the boulder, you can turn up left, onto the ledge path that contours towards the vast rock sweep of Central Buttress. At the ledge end, turn up the loose gully of Deep Ghyll, with a steep and gritty exit onto Scafell's summit plateau.



Scafell crags from the  
West Wall Traverse



As an over-excited Amazon blurb-writer puts it: "Through storms, avalanches, rock fall, unplanned bivouacs, and even the deaths of companions, we follow the Chamonix guide to the altar of his communion, on dark, icy walls that struck terror into the hearts of Europe's finest mountaineers." Or we could just enjoy six not altogether easy, and extremely enjoyable, hill days in the Lakes. Write about

them in lyrical French; wait 80 years; and see if people will still be reading your blog about it all... 🟩

**NOTE: These routes don't involve graded scrambling, but they are steep and quite serious, for experienced and well-shod walkers. For those competent with ice-axe and (where appropriate) crampons they are even more magnificent under snow.**



# Heaven in hell

*Daniel Neilson takes an expedition-style route along the Hell Valley to the peak of Germany's highest mountain*





**THIS STEEL BAR.** I had no idea who put it up, but I know it was probably around 70 years ago and that person isn't around anymore. They could have been having a bad day, mindful of home life, mindful of finishing this gruelling work. This steel bar. I didn't know of the metal's structural integrity but this steel bar was holding on it my life. Five hundred metres directly below me was a little patch of grass and a few tinkling goats. All that was stopping me was an inch-thick iron bar and cable, attached to a carabiner, attached to some cord, that, in case of a fall, would attach me to the

The author not looking particularly relaxed on the infamous Brett via ferrata



cliff face and avoid certain death (although under no circumstances should you fall on a via ferrata – “you don’t walk away from a via ferrata fall” I was told). Rock, now rock I get. It’s been there for ages... Actually ages. You can stand on it and it won’t bend or anything. This steel bar was playing on my mind. I was, to be fair, a bit scared. Yet, as I trotted, ok, steadily stepped clinging on to the cable with a grasp that would break knuckles, along 30 or so iron bars traversing a flat face in the Höllental Valley – that’s the Hell Valley – on the way up to the Zugspitze, I was grinning. Actually, this may be Type One fun after all. I was actually enjoying it. As risks go it was pretty calculated. Tim told a dirty joke, I told a dirtier one. How English to tell jokes in moments of nervousness. Onwards we clipped, zipped, unclipped, clipped and zipped again. We were climbing higher and higher. The blue tents of our makeshift campsite below diminished to the size of a lozenge.

We hiked on to safety, opened the Haribo, filled our bottles from the sparkling stream, and looked onwards to one of Germany’s largest glaciers. Within a couple of hours I’d be kicking steps, within three hours I’d be fighting for breath wondering where the next step is coming from and caring very little about my blistered hand. For now, bliss. Mountain and Haribo bliss.

**It had a gorge walk, some via ferrata, a wild camp, a glacier crossing, a mildly sketchy crux, all with an ‘expedition character’. Sold**

Earlier in the day Tim had expounded his theory of the ‘Hate Zone’, that moment, which could last for five minutes or an hour, when no matter how stunning the scenery, how wonderful the company is, when everything is rubbish. Horrible. And then it goes. I was in my ‘Happy Zone’. Everything is wonderful. My ‘Hate Zone’ was yet to come.

I’D FLOWN INTO MUNICH, and transferred to Garmisch-Partenkirchen to participate in the first Hanwag Alpine Experience. It was an opportunity for 36 outdoor enthusiasts, plus a couple of hangers-on (me), to take a few days out on an Alpine adventure. The full logistics were taken care of. There was a hotel with room overlooking the Zugspitze and a rather lovely lake, a little wristband that meant limitless food and drink, a pair of boots perfect for the terrain

(this was organised by a boot brand after all) and a guided walk up to the Zugspitze. Yet, for all the help we were given, I saw plenty of independent groups climbing the Zugspitze, albeit with via ferrata, and crampon skills and equipment. This is something that could be easily done independently as thousands do.

The Zugspitze is Germany’s highest mountain at 2,962 metres and is part of the Wetterstein mountain range – put your foot over the western summit and you are in Austria. Eighty years earlier the west and middle summits were significantly higher, one lowered for a cable car and another blown up for a control room for the Wehrmacht that wasn’t built.

To climb the mountain, we were given a choice of four routes. Number one, the Reintal Route, is mostly a long walk through the valley floor, with a stop at the Reintalanger Hut in preparation for 1,600 metres of ascent the second day with a bit of scrambling up the scree. If I’d have been on my own, this is the one I’d have chosen. Number four was the Jubiläumsgrat (Jubilee Ridge), one of Europe’s most spectacular ridge walks and described to me as ‘like Crib Goch, just five kilometres long’. I swiftly discounted that one. The second option was the shorter Stopselzieher route. I plucked for three like I pluck my wine from a

restaurant’s wine list – near to the top without going too pricy, and never number two. It was the Höllental route. It had a bit of everything they said, briefing us the evening before: a nice gorge walk, some via ferrata, a wild camp, a glacier crossing, a mildly sketchy crux, all with an ‘expedition character’. Sold. It was presented with typical German understatement. It had all of those elements, but each proved utterly unexpected, thrilling, slightly harder, and much, much more beautiful than I could imagine.

As you no doubt know, you are reading TGO after all, in an expedition with other self confessed gear nerds there is limitless capacity for kit jokes, mocking at the expense of someone else’s gear fail (or #gearfail for the really nerdy), and passionate defence of favourite brands. But we hadn’t come for a weekend of introspective walking we’d come for a bloomin’ good laugh, and that’s what we got.

We hopped out of the minibus just outside ➡



Along the spectacular gorge walk at the beginning of the trek



Attaching harnesses, via ferrata sets and helmets for the first steep section



A glimpse of the complex on top of the Zugspitze, Germany’s highest mountain





The perfect campsite?  
Under the Zugspitze



The first via ferrata  
section of the climb



of Hammersbach at the start of the route at 760 metres, counted our gear in again and made jokes about the chances of various bits of kit failing. A dozen or so of us, plus a few guides, headed off through the forested foothills of the Zugspitze in high spirits. It was a clear, cloudless sky, but within an hour we'd be soaked.

You can hear the raging water through the Höllental Gorge before it splashes you. A benign wander through the woods halts abruptly at a great wall (Must. Resist. Tolkien. Reference). We climbed up to a small hut, visited a bathroom carved into the rock, before bending through the first of a dozen tunnels, blasted through the rock at the beginning of the 20th century. The path winds its way up partly criss-crossing over the angry water below, and partly heading through the damp tunnels. Shafts of brilliant sunshine hit the falling foams of water creating surreal rainbows in an abundance that could compete with my daughter's My Little Pony books. It's hot, but I popped on a light waterproof to protect me from the waterfalls dropping down through the crevasses and into the torrent below. Writing this I'm reminded of an Edgar Allen Poe story that made a great impression on me as a teenager. A Google search for 'Edgar Allen Poe, beautiful river journey, chasm' leads me to *The Domain of Arnheim* about an incredibly wealthy man obsessed with finding a Nirvana-like place, or creating it at his expense. They travel by canoe upriver

Glacier cloaked its foot. We wandered through the valley, climbing above the river until we decided on the perfect camping spot at around 1,200m. It was still early in the afternoon as we pitched our tents. Plenty of time for a via ferrata primer and some games. As the sun dipped below the valley walls, the temperature dropped dramatically. Wine was produced as we rehydrated our food. Stars filled the sky and the Milky Way clouded above us. Meteors shot a hundred miles above us.

**MORNING DAWNED COOL AND CRISP.** I picked blueberries to pop in my porridge and made coffee before packing our bags, breaking into groups and heading onwards. At the end of the valley, we attached our harnesses, via ferrata sets and helmets. It was a dramatic ending to the valley, and an iron ladder rose above us. I clipped on for the first time and started climbing. It's a faff via ferrata. Clip, unclip, clip. But the vertical drops below me meant I never missed one. A metal cable railing leads our route, almost all day. We discussed what grade of scrambling this would be deemed in the UK. One, maybe two. Steep enough to carry a bit of rope, and know how to use it. And then occasionally another wall looms that would be a fairly serious climb. We traverse the infamous Brett, a series of steel pins jutting out from the near-vertical rock

**We flitted around the mountain in a seemingly arbitrary way, following the weak spots. New views constantly opened up around the mountain**

through a gorge: "As the evening approached, the channel grew more narrow, the banks more and more precipitous; and these latter were clothed in rich, more profuse, and more sombre foliage. The water increased in transparency. The stream took a thousand turns, so that at no moment could its gleaming surface be seen for a greater distance than a furlong."

Eventually Poe's view opens out to a great plateau and the domineering mountain ahead. Was he here? As we climbed steeply out of the ravine, sun lit our faces again and our clothes dried in moments. The plateau opened up before with a rich Alpine foliage. Ripe, wild blueberries grew abundantly by the cold, clear glacial water. Ahead, the Zugspitze, the only part of the vista shrouded in cloud, loomed overhead and the great Höllental

face. It looks terrifying to hop across these steel pins, but it's utterly thrilling. Elated we emerge on another plateau for snacks and water pulled from the fast-running glacial stream.

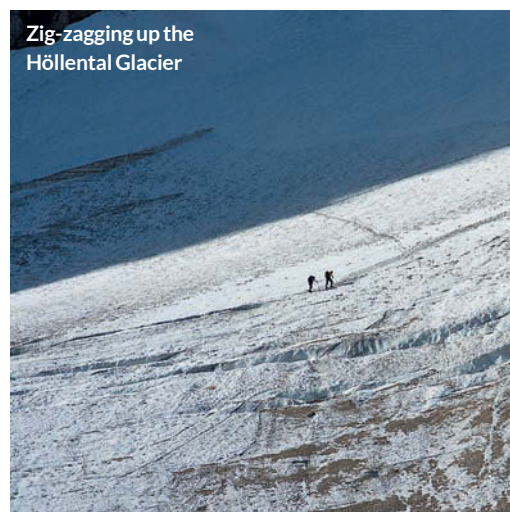
Revived we plodded onwards. The heat was now bearing down on us. Before us the vast arid valley led to the dirty glacier and above it the Zugspitze. It seemed an unfathomably long way away. There was at least another thousand metres of ascent and it looked very steep indeed. The next bit was, frankly, a bit of a schlep. The 'Hate Zone' briefly descends. Yes, the views are unbelievable, yes it's been a wonderful day, but blimey this bit is rubbish. I'm relieved to sit down on the edge of the glacier and pop on my crampons. It was getting exciting again.

What seemed like a fairly benign rise on the glacier now looked unnervingly steep. For ➡

Time to get the crampons on and the ice axes out for the Höllental Glacier



Zig-zagging up the Höllental Glacier



The sketchiest part of the trip is just above the glacier





The author takes a peep into a rather deep crevasse



The steepest and most challenging section of the Höllental Route on day 2





A full view of the Hölleental Valley from near the top of the Zugspitze

The surprisingly busy complex as seen from the actual summit



Climbing over the final section to the peak of the Zugspitze



me, it was actually the most nerve-shredding bit. Noticing my sudden silence and lack of stupid jokes, our group leader, Max, tied me on first, then the next four, and off we trotted weaving our way slowly up the glacier. Crevasses gaped open around us, and I for one, concentrated very hard on every step, placing my ice axe down in regimented timing (it must have been unbearable for Max, but he didn't show it). It was steep enough for a slip to be unthinkable.

Relieved to be at the top of a glacier, it dawned on me that we were at the crux. It's a steep climb over a crevasse and back onto near vertical hard rock – and no steel pins. It's a bit of rock climbing, but fairly easily negotiated, if not particularly elegantly. And then we were on the Zugspitze itself, a pale, almost silver mass of Wetterstein limestone. The climb itself is full of intrigue and surprise. Against the rock, it's hard to see the via ferrata cable high above you and the route isn't immediately apparent. We flitted around the mountains in an seemingly arbitrary way, following the weak spots and flatter bits. New views opened up around the

mountain and then disappeared again. I had a 'moment' as the distant tinkle of goat bells rises on the wind and into my ears. This was as Alpine as it gets. We were moving at pace now, or so it seemed to me. In fact, I lost any sense of time. Higher we climbed, the horizon got more and more distant as we peak over the valley walls. I'd forgotten my gloves and blisters were beginning to appear on my hands and then I realised I was probably relying too much on the cable for leverage. I turned to the rock, feeling for hand holds, watching my steps – the via ferrata became a 'just-in-case' again, but it was an effort.

As we reached the peak, snow and ice began to appear underfoot. The cool air was welcome as we puffed our way up. I could see the cross at the peak now (this is the Alps, there's always a cross). I saw a group ahead of us and our friends below us, but we'd not seen too many people. Imagine then, the surprise as we approached the summit to be met with a vast platform, with a hut, several cable cars and hundreds of picture snapping tourists. There was a typically large Alpine hut, a meteorology

station and, until recently, a post box. In the height of summer, thousands of people jump on the cable cars to enjoy its views and hospitality. On this sunny day it was busy.

We climbed up to the cross, along with other groups and a bunch of day visitors who had negotiated the tricky final section without the aid of a via ferrata set. I was faintly disappointed with the view of modernity and development, until I remembered the prospect of solid Bavarian food and a very large glass of beer.

Our legs were aching, our hands blistered, but curving them around a large stein of beer, pains were forgotten. We met the other groups who had taken different routes. Everyone was thrilled with their adventure from the walkers to the crazy Jubilee Ridge experts. The Zugspitze is a deep and complex mountain that can be completely accessible and full of adventure. More beer and more sausages, and then down to the bottom of the mountain for more. This is the Alpine way. And the Alpine way is fun. ▀

[hanwag.com/events/hanwag-alpine-experience](http://hanwag.com/events/hanwag-alpine-experience)



**COTSWOLD**  
outdoor

# CONDITIONS CHANGE COMFORT DOESN'T

THE LATEST GORE-TEX® FOOTWEAR TECHNOLOGY  
MORE BREATHABLE THAN EVER BEFORE



Engineered with



**SURROUND™**  
Product Technology

## INCREASED BREATHABILITY. DURABLY WATERPROOF ALL AROUND

This new X-SO 30 from Meindl features GORE-TEX® SURROUND™ Product Technology, which is the first and only technology making all round breathable and durably waterproof hiking shoes and boots possible. Moisture & heat can now also escape from below the foot thanks to the patented open construction of the SURROUND™ technology. Ultimately, this revolutionary technology means that your feet stay dry, cool and comfortable come rain or shine.

SELECTED STORES AND ONLINE AT [COTSWOLDOUTDOOR.COM](http://COTSWOLDOUTDOOR.COM)

**MEINDL**



“For my purpose holds  
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths  
Of all the western stars”

‘Ulysses’ - Alfred, Lord Tennyson

# Into the unknown

Steve Bull spent ten days backpacking  
across the Hornstrandir, a vast and rarely  
explored wilderness in northwest Iceland



IT WAS TWO DAYS since we had landed. The little red landing craft had returned to the boat, and the thrum of the engine receded as the vessel moved away, severing our link with civilization. We were all alone in a world of sighing wind and rain-beaded cloth.

I looked at Roussel and he glanced the same thought back at me: “God these packs are heavy.” Still, this is what we signed up for. Shouldering our loads, we headed out into the barren crags. This was our adventure. Northwest Iceland was, for us, the happy isles that Tennyson had extolled his readers to strive for, a land lit by a midnight sun in the height of summer.

Iceland is the new frontier, a country promoted as the alternative get-away, whether for a weekend break in Reykjavik or an adventure in the back of beyond. At its very

tip and on the most western and northern aspect is Hornstrandir, lying above 66 degrees north and overlooking the Denmark Strait. It has the delightful accolade of the “most famous unknown place in Iceland”.

It was to this land that the grandly titled Fuchs Foundation Expedition 2014 was setting out, two people and two very big rucksacks. It was my first expedition in several years and Roussel’s second ever expedition; his first had been the Antarctic. So Iceland had a lot to live up to. Could the northern sagas outshine the southern cross?

Iceland is a work in progress, its landscape still being heaved out of the bowels of the Earth. Thor is hammering away furiously, determined to give shape to this molten country. The sounds of his work roll regularly across the desolate countryside. ➔

Roussel heading out of Reykjafoordur with the Drangjokull icecap in the distance



Roussel on one of the 28 major rivers crossed







Beach front camp  
site in Furfjordur



# Backpacking Iceland

## The wilderness awaits....

Reykjavik, Iceland's capital jewel, was our first stop on the way north. Here, there is strength in numbers, a stronghold against the wilderness. In the hostel we played with kit, trying to unload our sacks to acceptable weights; the burdens just smiled back at us.

From Reykjavik we flew up to Isafjordur, the capital of the northwest. The flight in culminates in a steep and dramatic descent to a large fishing village. Isafjordur has that remote border town feel. Sat among the newspapers in the taxi van, we bumped into town as part of the last delivery of the day.

Our evening was spent on further kit shake downs, and a final slap-up meal. Roussel bore the brunt of my humour as he tucked into his vegetarian pie, I figured my burger was better preparation for a week of freeze-dried delight.

We were about to enter the lost world, but forecast was poor. Thor was wielding his hammer in a grey haze. Yet as we boarded the little ferry to our drop off, blue sky shone. Access to Hornstrandir is almost all by boat, you can get there by road, but only to the

we had been travelling an hour. If every river took us this long to cross there would be little exploring done. "We are crossing here, Roussel..." Roussel nodded.

Then within another mile, another river. This time, straight in with socks and all. We tripped and tramped alongside the fjord, the blinds were drawn down on any views except a tantalising stream of hope inching out on the northern horizon.

## The lonely estuary....

Honstrandir is a nature reserve, and designated camping sites are few and far between; pitching elsewhere requires special permission that we had. To our surprise, then, on a bleak coastline stretch, we found a flat area of grass with a toilet block and running water. Watched only by seals, we dined on potato and leek soup and shepherd's pie, all served al fresco.

We became adept at river crossings, yet the 800-metre tidal estuary of Fjordurinn did admittedly throw us. A chance encounter on the boat out had been our first knowledge of this challenge. I plotted the route using the

## Iceland is a work in progress, its landscape still being heaved out of the bowels of the Earth

southern side of Drangjokull. If you want to access the northern tip, then boat it is.

At the abounded settlement of Grunnavik the boat handler announced he would see us in eight days, all being well.

Our ambitious plan was to cross the plateau heading east, then go over the Drangjokull to drop down to the northern coast. But poor weather forced our hand, so we opted for the coastal route and crept past the unoccupied dwellings.

All the settlements in the area are abandoned. No one has lived here since the late 1940s, yet ghostly eyes still seem to keep watch. Traditional industry in Hornstrandir was based on the sea and the bird cliffs, so now the birds reign supreme. Descendants of the original settlers still visit for the summer, but dreams of settlement have left nothing more permanent than distant memories.

From the silent buildings we trudged into light rain and low cloud of the crags. To our left the vast expanse of Jokulfirdir gave misty views of the northern peninsula. Rain and ice feed the area's chilling veins.

"Let's try and cross here," I shouted to Roussel. We had spent the last half hour searching for the best crossing of our first major obstacle. The river ran fast and wide,

newest maps, but they did not show 'tidal effected paths'; the old maps did. Now armed with this information we pondered what time the tide went out as we looked for the 'path' that crossed the estuary. Fed by the Drangjokull icecap, this fjord was cold and daunting, and made the previous river crossings seem pitiful.

Help was at hand though, for on this remote coast a lone house was occupied by a lone man and his Yorkshire terrier. He did not speak any English, and our Icelandic was not great, but between us we worked out the tides. We shared a coffee as he showed us the fish he had caught. Barriers broke down as he smiled and we smiled back. The sun shone down and all was well as the ocean receded, revealing the hidden path. As we headed to cross, the man tended his nets. He seemed a lonely figure, hemmed in by solitude and with nothing but silence – and the odd bark – for company. As we walked towards the emptying fjord, that same sense of loneliness seeped into us.

Hands in heart we crossed the shifting sands and hardened mud, the deep glacial run off numbing our lower limbs. Safe on solid land, we saw hoof prints stretching out into the dreamy distance.

As the old man by the sea faded into the past a new vision of hospitality merged, in





Taking wind speed and  
temperature on the  
Drangjokull



Heading into  
Hrafnfjörður  
on day two

🔍 Science is a cruel  
mistress! High on the  
Drangjokull icecap

👤 Roussel walking through  
the pathless Furfjörður



the shape of a barefoot girl. In halting English she invited us for tea and cake. We took our socks off to dry in the sun and followed ‘Alice’ into the cabin. We were the fourth and fifth souls to have passed this way since June, the mother told us. We listened to tales of folk walking lengths of fjords to dances, late night gatherings in wild weather – harsh living in hard times and a spirit of community the land could not break. Now, the family came to this remote spot each summer to take solace from the world – escaping the madness beyond the mountains. Here was an oasis of friendship and family carved out of the wilds. With hard hearts we ate the last of our cake, bid our farewells and left the family to the long summer winds.

We headed over deep heather and wild lands into Hrafnfjörður, its majestic stretch of water punctuated by a lone cross. At the head of Hrafnfjörður, we reached the end of our day. Picking out a spot to camp next to the emergency shelter we eased our sacks onto the ground.

Roussel looked up in despair. “I’ve lost the tent pegs!” This was not going well. In the land of storms that is Hornstrandir, our shelter now lacked anchors. Thor’s hammer rattled on the wind as we sought a solution.

Roussel continued to search frantically

for the pegs, but to no avail. Taking the easy solution, we opted to hunker down in the emergency shelter.

An aspect I love about expeditions is lying all cosy in the sleeping bag, wild wind howling outside and you just talk. We both talked home and life until the candle spluttered out, leaving the wind to whistle round the cabin in the dark.

Wind and rain woke us. We changed our plans and decided to continue heading north to the settlement of Reykjarfjörður. From there, we would access the ice. Packing up I heard a shout from Roussel: “I’ve found them!” The elusive pegs were triumphantly held aloft as a big grin lit the morning and we headed to Furfjörður with light hearts.

### The most northerly swimming pool

Into deepening mist we came across our first and only bridge, over the river coming down from Skorarvatn. Heading east we crossed a land seen by few eyes, each in his own thoughts we moved slowly through a forgotten world.

Looking down from the ridge above Reykjarfjörður, all its houses shut up, hope of a lonely but welcome bar runs ludicrously high.

There are signs of some huts being used for summer dwellings, but the feeling is



# Backpacking Iceland



⬆️ Awaiting pick up, hot showers and real food

⬆️ Crossing the only bridge in the northwest

**For here is a land in which you can pretend you are real explorers, treading footsteps where few have tread. The terrain is tough, the weather can be harsh and the wind can take your breath away**

one of overwhelming desertion. No old man by the fjord or Alice and her family to lift our spirits. But there is a swimming pool!

We pitched our tent by an abandoned hut, both smiling as we put the pegs in, then went swimming. The pool, still with its 'no petting' signs on proud display, added to the end of the world feel. We both agreed to abide by the rules as we donned swimwear in the changing rooms. There is no doubt that this is the best heated pool in the world; even if the walk to it is rather long.

First thing the next morning the icecap glistened clear in the distance. Packing light, we headed up the ridge to gain access to Drangjokull. It wasn't long though, before mist rolled in and we crept through the familiar dragon breath. The GPS was essential as the compass needle danced on its points; we finally reached the ice after a six-kilometre trek. However, with visibility at 100m or less we conducted our science experiments on the lower reaches of the ice,

wrangling data from the wind for future school lessons. With cold toes but warm hearts we packed up and headed back to the pool.

The following day we retraced our steps in bright sunlight to Furfjordur. To the north a crystal blue sea stretched into the Arctic distance. South shone the icecap. Camping down by the shore we lazily watched the birds tumble and dance, on sea and surf, cloud and sky. Arctic foxes foraged for food within feet of us without care or fright. It truly was a magical place.

Soon we were heading back to the pickup point at Hrafnfjordur, with a hope to get another day on the icecap. Yet, 40mph winds buffeted us constantly as we headed over the pass, ruling out an ice day. So we chose to spend the final day on a remote peak, building a discreet cairn to the memory of Chris Henstock, architect of the 'teacher expeditions' we were undertaking. Our small, proud flag marked the occasion in a weathered wind.

Rain bounced off canvas on the final morning, and in the distance a white speck bounced on the sea: the boat was heading our way! We had spent seven days in this wilderness, and even though I was looking forward to heading home, the last camp was touched with sadness. For here is a land in which you can pretend you are real explorers, treading footsteps where few have tread. The terrain is tough, the weather can be harsh and the wind can take your breath away, but it doesn't have a 'dangerous' feel to it. Yes, experience and knowledge are necessary, but in summer the land will test you, not beat you.

This is a land that people have moved on from, and this is why it is so special. It allows you the freedom to spell out your dreams on the cobalt sky and write your own destiny in the lonely fjords.

Roussel and I had sailed beyond the sunset, fulfilled our mission, and bathed with the western stars. ▲



# Discover Iceland

with the experts

Experience the land of fire and ice - from ice climbing, hiking volcanoes and glaciers to river rafting, snowmobiling and more. Whether you're looking for a small group tour or a tailor made holiday, travel with us to discover the real Iceland.

Visit our website or call our travel specialists to plan your adventure.

30 YEARS  
HELPING YOU  
DISCOVER THE WORLD



DISCOVER  
the WORLD.CO.UK

01737 218 806



# 2015 *backpacking*light.co.uk OUTDOOR SHOW

Sat 25th April 2015 10am - 4pm

Cygnat Business Centre, Worcester Rd  
Hanley Swan, Worc's WR8 0EA

Following last years epic success (check out our video) we are putting on another lightweight show specifically for you to see some of the lightweight gear and unique products available in the UK for adventure racers, backpackers, bushcrafters, cycle tourers, globe trotters, hikers, paddlers, trail runners and walkers.

There will be **special deals only available on the day**, tent display area, brand representatives and fellow enthusiasts to chat with, **free parking**, tea and coffee and lots of the latest lightweight gear to fondle.

**Supporting brands include:** Alite, Boreas, Brunton, Eagle Creek, Eureka, Evernew, Exped, Gossamer Gear, GSI, Helinox, Integral Designs, Leki, Luxe Outdoor, Montane, Mountain King, MSR, Nigor, OMM, Petzl, Platypus, Primus, Rab, Sawyer Filters, Sea To Summit, Sunwise Glasses, Thermarest, Toaks, Vaude, Zebra Pots and more.

**Nearest accommodation (200m):** Blackmore Caravan and Camping Park bookings 01684 310280  
(Please use booking ref - The Backpackinglight Show)

Keep an eye on our website for updates, deals and reasons to make sure you are there!



*Stefan Durkacz* takes on the dramatic mountains and weather of an epic 290-mile backpacking adventure

# WALKING THE RIVER



SEVEN O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING UNDER flat grey skies. A chilly wind comes in from the North Sea and chivvies me along with breakfast and packing. I'm the only camper in acres of static caravans and I'm feeling a bit out of place. A little later I wander down to the beach. The tide is out revealing expanses of rippled sand and the vastness of sea and sky seem to compress the land to a sliver. Two and a half miles south across the mouth of the Firth of Tay is a long dark line of forest: Tentsmuir Point in north east Fife. That was my destination, but I'd be getting there the long way round – 290 miles, to be more precise.

I'd first had the notion to walk the boundary of the River Tay catchment several years before,

poring over familiar maps and tracing the Tay and its tributaries back to their remote origins. The Tay is Britain's biggest river system in terms of the volume of water discharged into the sea. It drains some 2,000km<sup>2</sup> mostly in the southern and central Highlands. The boundary of the catchment links up a smorgasbord of Scottish landscapes, from the dunes, farmland and woods of the east coast to the heathery tablelands of the Mounth; from the wild mountains, lochs and moors of Rannoch and Ben Alder to the homely Ochil hills. As a lover of all these landscapes and an inexperienced backpacker looking for a big adventure, this five-week expedition looked to be just the right challenge. 



# TAY WATERSHED



# River Tay Watershed

That morning on Monifieth Sands, however, I began to wonder what I'd got myself into. I had no idea whether I could complete such a long walk, let alone enjoy it. I had done countless day trips and overnights over the years but never anything on this scale. The only way to find out was to start walking. Shoving my doubts to the bottom of my backpack, I turned my back to the sea and headed inland.

## Through Angus and the Mounth: Monifieth to the Cairnwell

Away from Monifieth the route headed north into rural Angus. The walking was delightful as I meandered along back roads and farm tracks. Angus is a fertile county of ochre soil, magnificent beech trees and impenetrable gorse. Sometimes potential routes on the map, old tracks or abandoned railway lines, turned out to be completely choked with it. Angus is also replete with Pictish history. My route passed Restenneth Priory, founded by the Picts in 745AD sixty years after their momentous victory over Northumbria at nearby Dunnichen.

The weather was kind in those first few days. Early morning haar would burn back to give long, sunny afternoons. I crossed Carrot

Hill, a vibrant moor of heather, flowering gorse, blueberries, unfurling bracken and industrious butterflies and bumble bees at the eastern end of the Sidlaw Hills. Gazing south through the sunny haze, the Firth of Tay was already distant. That evening I camped deep in the woods on a soft carpet of beech leaves. I fell asleep to the hooting of owls and awoke to see a pair of roe deer browsing leaves nearby as the sun filtered through the trees.

After a night in the old town of Kirriemuir it was over the Highland boundary fault and into the Mounth. Cat Law was the first big hill and a magnificent viewpoint. I followed a long ridge for miles into the heart of the Mounth and the first Munro of the walk, Mayar.

The next day delivered the first swipe. The good weather broke down overnight, and I had a zero-visibility battle through freezing wind and sleet over the plateau. By the time I reached Cairn of Claise I was losing heat badly. I realised I hadn't fully anticipated these conditions in my choice of layering. I bailed out to Glen Clunie and hitched a lift to Braemar, where I spent the next couple of days resting, pondering the old saying 'Ne'er cast a clout till May be out'. Home went my flimsy windbreaker, replaced with a more substantial, insulated windproof jacket. At least my navigation had been good enough to see me through.

## The West Mounth wilderness: the Cairnwell to Dalwhinnie

While planning the walk, this was the stage that intrigued and unsettled me the most. Between the Cairnwell and Dalwhinnie the Tay catchment borders the Dee then the Spey river systems, the two great rivers of northeast Scotland. Great rivers tend to have wild and distant beginnings, and the route duly took me into some of the remotest country in Britain, south of the Great Glen. After returning to Glas Maol, which I'd had to abandon a couple of days before, I crossed the A93, took a deep breath, and set off into the tangle of hills above Glen Shee.

Two days of mixed weather took me over the Glen Shee Munros. There were fine camps by hill lochs overlooked by snow-patched mountainsides. On Carn Bhac the sun came out and took my breath away. To the west was a vast expanse of moor and mountain. It was a curious, uncomfortable reversal of polarity for a city dweller used to an environment dominated by human-made things. I walked on with some misgiving: this was what I was seeking, after all, wasn't it? Perhaps it was a premonition as the next day I was almost struck by lightning.

Humidity had built up as I crossed the remote Munro of An Sgarsoch. The storm announced itself suddenly and with nowhere to go I had to shed pack and poles and crouch where I was as ear-splitting thunder and near-simultaneous lightning turned everything a terrifying split-second white. Badly shaken, after summiting Carn an Fhithleir I dropped down to Glen Feshie for a restorative camp in the pine woods and reflected on what it means to take risks and not be in control.

My watershed route was scuppered but I was determined to reach Dalwhinnie on foot. The next two days' walking were wonderful as I unwound and the weather improved. I had a heart-stopping encounter with a golden eagle above Glen Feshie, which flapped heavily off a dismembered hare as I approached. After sprawling Leathad an Taobhainn I shadowed a ravine down to the awesome Gaick Pass for a final camp before a hot and sunny crossing to Dalwhinnie. Watching a pair of eagles ride the thermals in the early morning blue above Carn na Caim seemed a fitting full stop to this stage.

## Into the wild west: Dalwhinnie to Tyndrum

This fine interlude lasted as long as my rest day in Aviemore. When the train dropped me back at Dalwhinnie the clouds were gathering and change was in the air. I walked the Fara ridge which parallels Loch Erich towards the Ben Alder massif. The following day in wild

**Great rivers tend to have wild and distant beginnings, and the route duly took me into some of the remotest country in Britain**



Setting off from Monifieth Sands near Dundee



## OVERVIEW OF EACH STAGE OF THE ROUTE

### STAGE 1: **Monifieth to the Cairnwell**

Easy walking on tracks and minor roads leads through a rolling landscape of woods and fields to the town of Kirriemuir. From there, the terrain becomes hillier as the route approaches the Highland boundary fault. Heathery ridges above the Angus glens lead in to the Mounth plateau and the first 3,000ft tops of the walk.

### STAGE 2: **The Cairnwell to Dalwhinnie**

A serious and remote stage. Demanding walking over several Munros, with some complex route finding in poor weather, leads to the head of Glen Tilt. From here the watershed crosses many miles of vast and remote high moorland to the spectacular Gaick Pass, before looping over the Drumochter hills to Dalwhinnie.

### STAGE 3: **Dalwhinnie to Tyndrum**

Following the Scottish watershed, the landscape changes as you head west into the central Highlands. After the Ben Alder massif the route traverses high ridges above Rannoch. The peaks and spires of the west dominate the horizon beyond Rannoch Moor. The watershed skirts the north of the moor before heading south over the Black Mount and into the hills of upper Glen Lyon and Bridge of Orchy, then over successive steep, grassy Corbetts to Tyndrum.

### STAGE 4: **Tyndrum to Strathyre**

This stage features demanding walking with much ascent over the Ben Lui group, Cruach Ardrain, and Stob Binnein. The going is strenuous along the boggy, craggy crest of the Braes of Balquhiddier before a descent towards Strathyre. There is a lush and sheltered feel to the landscape around Balquhiddier and Strathyre that feels closer to the nearby lowlands than to the previous stages of the walk.

### STAGE 5: **Strathyre to Tentsmuir Point**

After initial mountainous walking the route descends gradually over the wide moors of the Braes of Doune, covered in knee-high heather and riven with peat canyons. Small roads and tracks lead across Strathallan and into the grassy Ochils. From here to Tentsmuir Point the route winds through the ever-diminishing hills into agricultural land and finally the dunes and extensive beaches of Tentsmuir.



# River Tay Watershed

Loch Vrotachan camp



weather I traversed Bheinn Bheoil, meeting no one but a hardy ring ouzel in the murk. I gave up in frustration on Ben Alder itself as the wind picked up further, and dropped down instead to camp by the loch. The unsettled conditions eased enough for a wonderful traverse of Sgor Gaibhre and Carn Dearg to Rannoch, but the next day was the lowest point of the walk. I lost the path over Rannoch Moor in torrential rain and arrived several hours later at Kingshouse soaked to the skin. The best camping pitches were taken so I spent a damp night

on a waterlogged pitch as the groundwater threatened to overtop my bathtub groundsheet.

Poor weather kept me off the Black Mount. I took the West Highland Way to Bridge of Orchy then a bus to Tyndrum hostel for the night to dry out my soaking gear. Conditions improved, as did my spirits. I returned to Bridge of Orchy as morning cloud was burning back from the summits, and meandered over Beinn Achaladair and Beinn a'Chreachain. I visited the ancient Celtic shrine of Tigh nam Bodach. In this loneliest of places I was surprised and glad

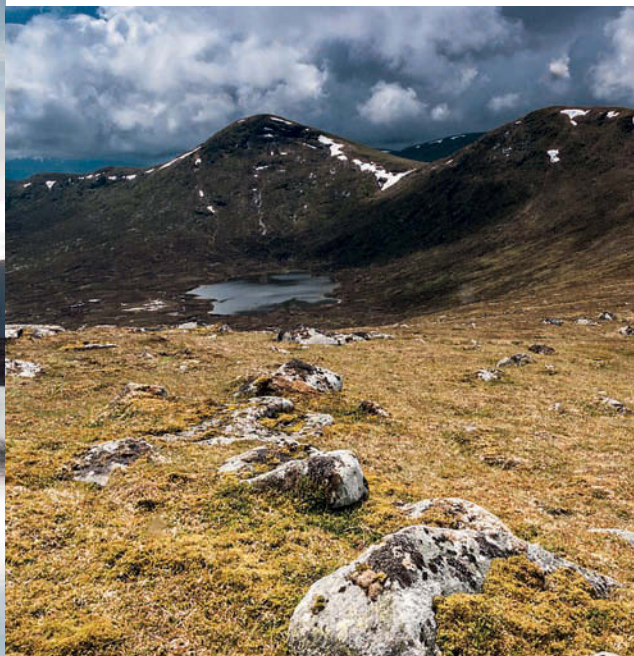
to meet a group of people visiting the shrine. I carried the warmth of the meeting with me over Beinn Mhanach to another rain-hammered camp. It had been a disappointing stage in a way: no Ben Alder, no Black Mount. I'd had enough wet and wind, enough solitude, and craved dry clothes, fresh food, cold beer and human contact.

The weather was still unsettled and the wind fierce as I crossed the grassy hills to Tyndrum for a rendezvous and a few days off with my wife and daughters. It had been a reality check for my ambitions but I was still going strong.






**V** Sgor Gaibhre near Rannoch



**The storm announced itself suddenly; ear-splitting thunder and near-simultaneous lightning turned everything a terrifying split-second white**

Tay. Head down, buried in my waterproofs, I ground out the miles to Crianlarich.

The following morning, reaching the summit of Cruach Ardrain, I was taken aback by the view. It was a pivotal moment when I seemed to be leaving one place and entering another. I could see mountains that can be viewed from Scotland's central belt: the Trossachs, Ben Ledi, Ben Vorlich and Stuc a'Chroin. This was the watershed between the Tay and the Forth. That night, camped in a giant's landscape of massive boulders at the feet of Ben More and Stob Binnein, I allowed my thoughts to drift to the end of the walk.

There was still work to do though. I plodded to the drizzly summit of Stob Binnein, at 1,165 metres the highest point of the route. Somewhere on the Braes of Balquhiddy, weaving around crags and bogs, I encountered a parcel of red deer hinds. The adults fled but a calf, overcome with curiosity, locked eyes and walked right up to me. 

### **The southern Highlands: Tyndrum to Strathyre**

From Tyndrum I walked over the hills around Glen Cononish. After a midge-infested camp I traversed the Ben Lui group in rain on compass bearings. On the summit ridge of Ben Lui the poor visibility played tricks with my sense of scale. Modest snow remains appeared like glaciers disappearing into the mist and my brain reeled as common sense and eyes struggled to agree. Between Ben Lui and Ben Oss I passed the source of the

## **OTHER POTENTIAL RIVER WATERSHED WALKS**

**The Scottish Highlands south of the Great Glen is big river country. Other than the Tay, the land is especially shaped by two other major river systems: the Dee and the Spey. Both would offer challenging and committing multi-week expeditions around the boundaries of their catchments.**

### **River Spey**

From the lowlands of the Moray coast the watershed route would involve an end-to-end traverse of the Monadh Liath and Creag Meagaidh to Drumochter. The Spey, Dee and Tay watersheds converge on the remote summit of Carn an Fhithleir south of the Cairngorms. The Spey catchment boundary continues over all the 4,000 foot mountains of the Cairngorms except Cairngorm itself, then Beinn a'Bhuird and Ben Avon. Beyond the Ladder Hills and the extensive moors that give rise to the River Deveron, the route gradually winds back down to the coast.

### **River Dee**

This would be a route to test the hardest of heather moor and peat bog lovers. Long rural approaches from the east coast lead through Aberdeenshire onto the moors separating the Dee from the River Don. Days of heather-hopping would lead the persistent backpacker eventually to the Cairngorms via Morven (872m), Brown Cow Hill (829m) and lonely Loch Buig. Converging with the Spey watershed the route would take in the same Cairngorm summits before turning east again on Carn an Fhithleir. After the Cairnwell, it's a long and challenging march across the Mounth to Mount Keen and beyond. Be prepared for many, many peat hags.



# River Tay Watershed



Camping under very old beech trees

Late in the evening I camped by a hill loch overlooked by crags. The clouds cleared and the lowering sun set sky and water ablaze and made the rocks glow like coals. Next morning in hot sunshine I walked over Meall an t-Seallaidh down to Balquhider, then the easy miles to Strathyre village by the lush meadows and sluggish waters of the River Balvag. My sister met me at the local campsite for a day of lounging in the sun, a trip to Callander for provisions and an Indian restaurant blow-out, and a convivial evening of beers, malts and football at the Strathyre Inn.

## To the sea: Strathyre to Tentsmuir Point

One last Highland bastion separated me from the lowlands. From Balquhider Station I battled through felled forestry and over a boggy ridge to the steep slopes of Beinn Each, on the watershed between Lochs Lubnaig and Earn. Fox cubs watched me from a jumble of boulders as I sweated uphill. A late start meant a long, beautiful evening of solitude. I walked the ridge to Stuc a'Chroin through a dreamscape of long shadows and shifting clouds. A flitting ring ouzel, my only

companion on the Stuc, could have been the mountain's spirit. I savoured a last high camp by Lochan a'Chroin. The lowlands were spread out below, a tamed world viewed from a wild perch.

There were still many rough miles to cover over the Braes of Doune and beyond, through moorlands, before picking up country roads to Auchterarder. The weather held as I followed the watershed into the Ochils. Eastwards the hills are drowned in conifers and campsites became hard to find. Each day entailed a search for local accommodation. The route wound through woods, fields and hills crowned with remains of Iron Age forts. I sensed something ancient and unshakeable in those potholed back roads and fields of cattle chewing the afternoon cud. I felt so fit and used to being outdoors that I barely noticed the miles as I sauntered along as carefree as I could ever remember being.

The end had to come eventually. Entering Fife I picked up the Fife Coastal Path. The trail angled down to the Tay at the former monastic centre of Balmerino, through Newport and Tayport and into Tentsmuir Forest. Now I was in that dark line of trees gazing across at Monifieth, so nearby but also five weeks, dozens of hills, a couple of scrapes, and nearly 300 miles behind me.

A little gate opened onto the dunes. Skylarks soared and the sun broke through as I came to a stop where gentle waves washed the sand. What had I learned from the journey? Maybe just that walking is the oldest magic trick in the book. The simple repeated daily act of putting one foot in front of the other had made the world bigger, wilder and mysterious again. I couldn't ask for any more. ▲

## ABOUT THE RIVER TAY WATERSHED

### The River Tay

The Tay derives its name from the Scots Gaelic word *tatha*, meaning 'powerful'. It's the longest river in Scotland, and also the largest in Britain by volume of water discharged into the sea. The source of the Tay is reckoned to be the Allt Coire Laoigh which rises on the col between Ben Lui and Beinn Oss.

The Tay catchment is approximately 2,000 square miles (5,200km<sup>2</sup>), and the catchment boundary is about 290 miles (470km) long. There are 31 Munros and 14 Corbetts on the

catchment boundary, of which I reached the summit of 23 and 7 respectively. The highest point is Stob Binnein (1,165m).

### Planning and logistics

This is mostly an off-trail mountain route and crosses some very remote and exposed hill country. Self-sufficient wild camping is essential for much of the way, and good map and compass skills are a must.

There are well-provided villages and small towns spaced at fairly regular intervals along or close to the route. Re-stocking en route

is therefore straightforward; the most food I needed to carry at any one time was eight day's worth from the Cairnwell to Dalwhinnie, and from Dalwhinnie to Tyndrum.

When planning out an itinerary for the walk I needed to allow some leeway for poor weather and some very rough terrain. With hindsight I would have factored in even more 'wild card' days, which may have allowed me to sit out some of the bad weather and reach more summits.

Finally, always expect the unexpected! A run-in with lightning was something I hadn't

considered at all, and it dented my confidence for a few days. I wanted to be anywhere other than up high and exposed! This incident brought home to me that long-distance backpacking is as much a mental as a physical game.

### Maps

The Tay catchment boundary is covered by the following OS Landranger 1:50,000 maps, in the sequence that I used them: 54, 53 (a very small part of the north-east corner), 44, 43, 42, 41, 50, 51, 57, 58 and 59.






 England's wild places  3 x day walks

# ENGLAND'S LOST WILDERNESS

It's not only in the high mountains that you can find wild places. Historically, the low wetlands in the south-east of the British Isles were equally as rich and untamed. *Edoardo Albert* heads out on a journey of discovery



**CONFESSION TIME.** I love mountains, the wild high places this magazine is dedicated to, but it's the flatlands – marshes, fens, plains, steppes – that fascinate me, exerting a sort of appalled, rubbernecking attraction. There's something about the way I can walk for hours and then stop and look around and realise that I haven't got anywhere; how the sun pins the walker to the ground like a sadistic lepidopterist; the way the world itself seems to roll beneath your feet as if each stride is turning the globe.

I would have chalked this all up to personal peculiarity if it had not been for a series of discoveries while writing and researching my books. It turns out that, for almost all our history, the true wildernesses of England, the places people whispered of in fire-lit tales as the refuge of monsters and the haunt of bandits, were not mountains and moors, but marshes and meres. Smugglers and bandits, radicals and revolutionaries have all emerged from or taken refuge in these shifting, uncertain wild 



# England's wilderness

places, disappearing into legend among the rushes and reeds. Today, those seeking escape from civilisation and its discontents head north and west, to where the geology of Britain has largely confined our hills and mountains. But, once, wildness was wet, not high.

I set out to explore what remains of England's lost wildernesses. But, first, I had to find them.

## Fobbing Marsh

I'm a Londoner: child of immigrants, born and raised in the Great Wen. The city is a creation of the river, and the Thames marshes were the first lost wilderness I went in search of.

By the village of Fobbing, near the candy-coloured delights of Canvey Island, the land steepens down to a flat, ridged plain, scored with

catch some of the fear that stalks the accounts of fens and marshes in English tales and legends. But then the shapes resolved into cattle, as surprised to see me as I was to see them, and the rising sun began to burn off the mist.

After so long walking on level ground, the climb back up to Fobbing proved surprisingly difficult for muscles trained into the horizontal. In the village, outside the White Lion pub, I saw a sign commemorating the villagers who had risen in revolt against the imposition of a swingeing poll tax – but this revolt took place in the 1380s, not the 1980s. The people of Fobbing lit the match that set off the Peasants' Revolt; John Ball, the hedge priest whose sermons on the injustices of the feudal system provided the spiritual justification for the revolt lived in Norfolk and Essex before moving to

which means 'trespasser'. A better description for the river could scarce be found, for it is a wilful, unpredictable water, forever flooding the flatlands around its mouth. The Isle of Axholme was an isolated area of raised ground above the surrounding marshland, and the site of the first great battle over the use and reclamation of fenland. In 1626, King Charles I sold Hatfield Chase, a huge area of peat bog just west of the Isle of Axholme, to a Dutch drainage engineer named Cornelius Vermuyden, who would get to keep for himself one third of the drained land. Only, the king had no authority to sign over the rights of common grazing, which local people depended upon. For where outsiders looked upon Hatfield Chase and saw it as 'evil in winter, grievous in summer and never good', the people who made their living around and upon the marshlands understood them well, exploiting them for lush pasture in high summer when other fields were bare, fishing and fowling, harvesting hemp for sails and rope, and cutting peat. The people of Axholme could work out what the drainage ditches Vermuyden was digging through Hatfield Chase meant and they 'came unto the workmen and beat and terrified them, threatening to kill them, if they would not leave their work'.

The Battle for the Bogs had begun, and it continued for the best part of the next three centuries, the rich and powerful gradually nibbling away at the marshland and taking it under their control, until the original 880 square miles of marsh in the Humberhead Levels was reduced to the peat bogs of Thorne Waste and Hatfield Moor.

## The true wildernesses of England, the places people whispered of in fire-lit tales as the refuge of monsters and the haunt of bandits, were not mountains and moors, but marshes and meres

creeks and channels; a 5,000-acre remnant of the great Thames marshes that walked along the river to the sea. Arriving at dawn just after the longest day of the year, I was greeted with a sight that was slightly less apocalyptic than I'd hoped for. Yes, the sun in its rising stained the river a pleasing shade of crimson, but where were the columns of fire? Last time I'd been this way, the oil refineries by the river were sending up great goutts of flame from ranks of flare stacks, as if greeting the sun in kind. But today, the refineries were cold, lifeless. I learned later that they had gone into receivership; the last shut down in 2013 – apparently even oil mega corporations can go belly-up.

Fifteen minutes later I was thoroughly lost. This, I decided, staring at a hugely unhelpful OS map, was ridiculous. I was only just outside the M25, smack in the middle of the most densely populated area of the most densely populated country in Europe, and I was lost. As morning mist rose up to cover my legs, and drown any appreciable landmarks in shifting grey, I caught a first, halting sense of the shifting, subtle nature of these places, which are neither land nor water, but phase from one state to the other; as shapes swirled thickly in the mist, I began to

Kent; John Wrawe raised the men of Essex and stirred revolution in Cambridgeshire.

As I walked the flatlands and marshlands of England, I found myself also following a trail of religious and political radicalism – it almost seemed that the flatter the landscape, the more revolutionary the ideas it spawned.

## Hatfield Moor

There are few areas flatter than Lincolnshire. This was once the marsh kingdom of Lindsey, one of the small realms that grew up in the post-Roman splintering of Britain, a domain created by its geography, for the great fenlands of Cambridgeshire formed its southern limit, and the Humber estuary its northern edge, while the rivers Witham and Trent all but cut it off from the country to the west. Lindsey, 'the island of Lincoln', has the cathedral as its peak, but other islands rose from the surrounding seas of marsh and reed, notably the Isle of Axholme. That was where I went next in my search for England's lost wildernesses.

Trent, the name of one of the two great rivers that drain into the Humber Estuary, comes from the Brythonic word 'Trisanton',

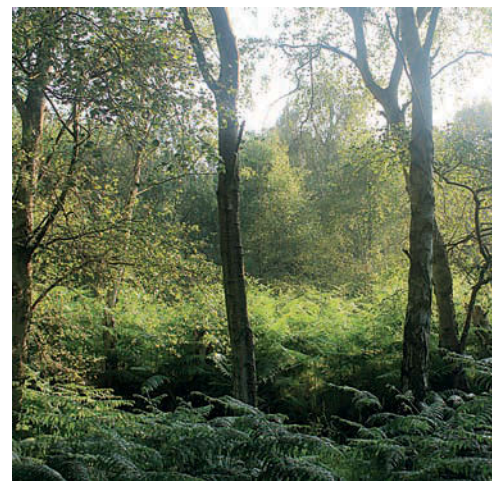
ARRIVING AT DAWN, and pausing to take photos, a cloud of insects descended and I was immediately reminded that the first, and greatest, defender of the marsh was the mosquito and the diseases it carried. Ague – malaria – the sweating sickness of marsh and fen had done much to create the miasma of fear that surrounded England's wildernesses – for after all, a true wilderness must have the potential to kill the visitor.

'Beware of adders.' The signs, helpfully posted at intervals, showed there were other possibly lethal inhabitants of the Moor. Sadly, any snake sunning itself in the early morning light heard me long before I saw it, and slid quietly away, but the birds were not nearly so bashful, serenading me throughout in the most full-throated manner I've heard outside a rainforest. The patchwork of ponds, bogs, lakes, woods, scrub and





This page: views from the Hatfield Moor walk





# England's wilderness



## A true wilderness must have the potential to kill the visitor

stripped clear peat make for as varied a series of habitats as can be found in Britain today. But I emerged onto stripped slabs, where the industrial scrapers of Fisons and others pared the peat from the land, leaving a landscape that's as near to the Western Front as anything I've seen. Walking out into the wastes, water lying in sheet silver either side of the ridges, I was in as lonely a place as there is in England.

Walking the perimeter fence of HMP Lindholme is a chastening experience, the metallic clangs from the prison works interspersing with the occasional siren. But a turn into a glimpsed opening, and I was bathed in green, leaf-filtered light, the skeletal finger of a bog-drowned tree pointing from water to sky. Leaving the moor, I returned to the Isle of Axholme and found that here too, the flatlands had produced a radical re-evaluation of society; for Epworth, a village of the Isle, was the birthplace and early home to John and Charles Wesley, the founders of Methodism. Again, the flatlands were the cradle of radicalism. What would the Fens, greatest of them all, produce?

### Wicken Fen

Driven from Hatfield Chase, bankrupted and imprisoned, Cornelius Vermuyden bounced back. The Fens were the great prize for the land reclaimers, and Vermuyden, with his Dutch expertise, was their chosen champion. But the locals fought back, destroying sluices and breaking dams. Insurrection was in the air, and the commoners found a champion in a local farmer, a 'Mr Cromwell of Ely'. This farmer ensured that their complaints against the commandeering of the commons were included in the Grand Remonstrance presented to King Charles I in 1641.

In a betrayal that seems as great as the remonstrance, once the king was beheaded and the farmer had become Lord Protector, Cromwell instigated the draining of the Great Level, engaging the men of his own New Model Army to guard the work parties. Battle continued through the next two centuries, but it was a one-way process. Charles Kingsley, writing in the 19th century, remembered how 'dark-green alders, and

### Views on the walk from Wicken Fen to Ely

pale-green reeds, stretched for miles round the broad lagoon ... high overhead hung, motionless, hawk beyond hawk, buzzard beyond buzzard, kite beyond kite, as far as eye could see ... They are all gone now.'

The largest of all England's wildernesses, the Great Level, was finally bisected and dissected, its life-giving waters drained, in the 19th and 20th centuries.

It's not quite all gone. Wicken Fen is the oldest site in the care of the National Trust, some 900 acres of fen, part of which has never been drained. The Trust plans to extend this to 10,000 acres, stretching as far as Cambridge, by the end of the century. I set off to walk from Wicken to the Isle of Ely, Cromwell's home, following the River Great Ouse.

WICKEN FEN IS a bird watchers' – and song listeners' – delight; it resounded with liquid chimmers and churrs. The river ran north, between over-engineered banks, towards the distant, looming tower of Ely Cathedral. I'd been walking for a while before I realised that the Ouse ran at a higher level than the surrounding fields of carrots and cabbages; it flows between raised embankments for now but should the levee break, the flood would be catastrophic; for the peat of the levels, once drained, has shrunk, lowering the ground surface below river level, below sea level. It was with fantasies of flood running through my imagination that I arrived in Ely and plodded upwards to the exquisite cathedral.

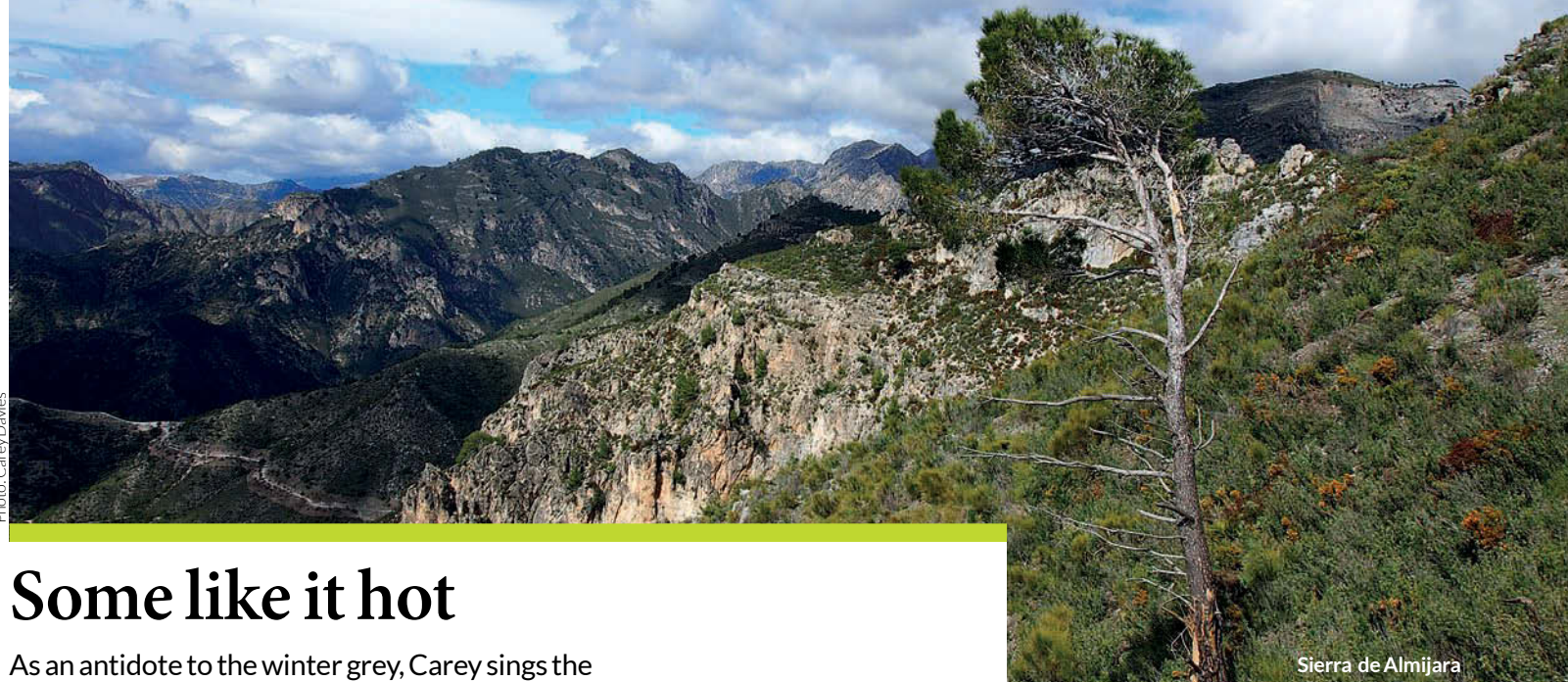
The Fen was dark when I returned. I had walked back through twilight along an almost enclosed green lane, where a hunting barn owl swooping below the branches nearly flew into me and two playing hares ground to an abrupt halt before making off into the fields.

I, as do we all, enjoy the benefits of modern civilisation but listening to the creak of willow in the darkness I dreamed of flood, and the return of the waters to the Great Level. The writer George Monbiot has called for the rewilding of Britain, but he has largely confined this to the hills. How much more worthwhile would it be to reclaim England's true lost wildernesses, that mostly lie around and about our centres of population, that we might, once again, have at our doorsteps the great, stinking, shifting levels.

*What would the world be, once bereft  
Of wet and of wilderness? Let them be left,  
O let them be left, wildness and wet;  
Long live the weeds and the wilderness yet.*  
'Inversnaid', Gerard Manley Hopkins 🟩



Photo: Carey Davies



Sierra de Almirajara

## Some like it hot

As an antidote to the winter grey, Carey sings the praises of walking in the Mediterranean

*"Out of a gothic North, the pallid children  
Of a potato, beer-or-whiskey  
Guilt culture, we behave like our fathers and come  
Southward into a sunburnt otherwhere"*  
W.H. Auden, 'Goodbye to the Mezzogiorno'

THE SIERRA DE ALMIJARA make a surreal backdrop to the Costa del Sol. You look up between the gaps in the holiday homes and tower blocks to see creamy-coloured crests of limestone, immaculate swathes of pine forest and soaring sunlit peaks that effortlessly best Ben Nevis in height. Imagine the Dolomites above Blackpool or the Picos de Europa above Barry Island, and you get some idea.

A week before I was in the Coniston fells, being strafed by spindrift and whipped by demonic winds so cold they made my teeth ache. It was the sort of fun you enjoy in retrospect, and even then with quite a bit of scepticism. Living in Britain, you might learn make a virtue of necessity and acquire a taste for mountains beleaguered by Atlantic weather systems in the grip of winter, but it's the sort of masochistic vice you'd struggle to explain to someone from abroad, like black pudding or Oasis.

It's always a relief, and a revelation, to walk in hills that don't seem to want to punish you for the audacity of stepping foot on their slopes. I was visiting my dad, a retired snowbird who lives for a couple of months over the winter in Nerja, a town on the eastern edge of the Costa del Sol with a few obligatory sprawling resort complexes but a centre that has retained its Andalusian integrity. Today we walked up from



### Mountain magic

Carey Davies

Extraordinary moments in wild places

its outer suburbs and straight into a butterfly-filled barranco lined with wild lavender and pine, disappearing from the town within moments into a wondrous natural environment.

We climbed up through the trees on to a sunlit ridge, where the whole range opened up before us. Miraculously, considering its close proximity to the costa del concrete, the scene was largely free of visible human intrusion except for the odd track and fire-break, the mountains lushly covered in vegetation compared to our bald hills. But like anywhere bordering the Mediterranean, the land is far from untrodden; on closer inspection, you find evidence of agriculture in the form of abandoned farmsteads, tumble-down dry stone walls, and exquisite trails worn marble-smooth by the passage of feet. There is a clandestine past, too; these hills hid republican guerrillas in

the Spanish Civil War and Morisco rebels in the anti-Islamic persecutions of the 16th century, and the intricate geography and proliferation of karst caves often made it ripe for banditry.

As well as Spain, I have walked in France, Italy, Greece, Turkey and Palestine. Despite their cultural diversity and vastly differing political circumstances, the experience of walking in all these Mediterranean countries often has a common regional texture; sculpted limestone, almond blossom, steeply cascading streams, white villages, olives and oranges, munificent soils, forests filled with the heady fragrances of rosemary and resin, and the arcane atmosphere left behind by the relics of Europe's oldest civilisations.

Linking them all is the bright blue ocean, its timeless surface belying past millennia of commerce, conquest and colonisation. Today, it was strange to look down from the summit heights over that sun-shimmered sea and contemplate the human turmoil occurring around its shores: cheery things like debt-crippled countries, refugee boats, civil wars, rising fundamentalism, intractable territorial disputes. Even in such peaceful surroundings, the noise of society intrudes.


Over the next week there was more wandering through high forests, marvelling at baroque limestone scenery and clambering through spectacularly eroded gorges. At one point a river suddenly and surreally materialised in a dry bed, like a snake from the cold karst underworld slithering to the sea. Is there anywhere better on earth? 





Photo: Chris Townsend

# The ethics of wild camping

As the debate over wild camping around Loch Lomond rages on, Chris examines its etiquette

**FOLLOWING ON FROM** last month's column about the controversy over the proposals to ban wild camping in various parts of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park due to the mess that some roadside campers were leaving I've been thinking about real wild camping and how it should be done. The phrase often used is 'leave no trace' (it's even the name of a very worthy American outdoor organisation) but I prefer minimum impact as I think there's always some sign you've been there, even if it's only flattened grass or boot prints in the mud. Whatever it's called though the aim should always be to leave an area as pristine as possible so that no-one passing by will know it's been used and if anyone ever camps there again they too can have the joy of a real wild site and that feeling of being in untouched nature.

The perfect site has a superb view, a smooth, flat, soft place for your shelter, water close by and somewhere comfortable to sit and watch the world. And of course the weather should be warm and dry and windless. Sometimes that all comes true. More often it doesn't. Another consideration anyway should be the nature of the site and whether you can camp there without doing damage. Luckily the places most easily damaged – flower meadows, marshy ground – aren't generally that attractive for camping. The best sites are on firm grassy or bare ground that drains well and these are the ones that stand up best to camping. Such terrain may be on the edge of the wet meadow or marsh but it won't be in it. Often small patches of this ground can be found along streams or on raised



## Backpacking

**Chris Townsend**

TGO's Gear Editor and long-distance expert

**A perfect site has a superb view, a smooth, flat, soft place for your shelter, water close by and somewhere comfortable to sit**

banks even when the surrounding area is boggy.

Once a pitch has been selected it shouldn't be altered. Indeed if it needs altering look for somewhere more suitable. Okay, the odd rock or stick may occasionally need to be moved but if you do so put them back afterwards (especially rocks). Old camping books often describe digging scoops for your hips or gathering vegetation to sleep on. Modern comfortable sleeping mats make these practices unnecessary.

A particular bugbear of mine is the putting of rocks on tent pegs and then leaving them in a circle. I've spent too much time dismantling such rings over the years. They shouldn't be necessary if you have a decent set of tent pegs (I always carry a variety for different types of ground) and if you do it all rocks should be replaced where they came from afterwards. The aim, remember, is that no-one should know you've been there.

Care needs to be taken when cooking too. Camp fires are out unless there's somewhere they can be lit without scarring the ground such as a shingle bank or you know how to make a fire pit or mound and how to restore the area afterwards. Backpacking stoves can scorch the ground too though, especially low profile ones (I confess to having unintentionally been responsible for this myself in the past). A disc of aluminium under the burner can stop this as can using a flat rock as a stand.

Going back and forth to the nearest water can lead to little paths being created. This can be avoided by having enough containers that you can collect all the water you need in one go. This is easy to do with modern collapsible containers and is also convenient, especially when the weather turns wet, as you can stay in your shelter.

Finally when leaving a camp check for any overlooked items such as tent pegs or tiny bits of rubbish. After packing my rucksack I like to have a last look round to make sure the site is as pristine as possible. 📸



Follow Chris on Twitter:  
[@townsendoutdoor](https://twitter.com/townsendoutdoor)



OVER THE PAST 150 YEARS OR SO, local communities, particularly those in remote areas, have become used to having things imposed on them with very little opportunity to have any meaningful say in what is happening. Whereas previously it was (mostly absentee) landlords dictating whether the dominant land-use was sheep-farming, forestry or sport shooting, more recently these often fragile communities have found themselves at the centre of a battleground between developers and conservation agencies.

Sometimes we find ourselves singing from the same hymn-sheet, as for example in the case of the Viking windfarm on Shetland, where objections from both camps have been over-ruled, not even by a Scottish body, but by judges at the Supreme Court in Shetland. Frank Hay, chairman of Sustainable Shetland, has described the development of 103 turbines, each 145 metres high, as having “dire implications for the Shetland community and environment”, a view backed by all the main conservation bodies.

By contrast, in a letter in the latest issue of the Mountaineering Council of Scotland’s magazine *The Scottish Mountaineer*, David Hannah, chair of Ardgay and District Community Council in Sutherland, says they are “fed up with organisations spouting off about how much they object to turbines being erected in their playground, without consulting the people who have to live here. He goes on to accuse the John Muir Trust, RSPB and Scottish Natural Heritage of being bodies “none of whom contributes anything to the local economy and none of whom provides any employment for local people”.

Some of these accusations are a bit unfair, as I’ll try to show, but the real nub of the argument comes a little later in Mr Hannah’s letter when he says that “those of us who are left [here] have no recourse but to depend on the community benefit provided by the developers”. This is where the problem lies. Part of the contract between government and windfarm developers is that, as one of the conditions of approval being granted, a sum is set aside to be paid to local communities to provide benefits such as village halls, sports centres etc. These payments can continue in some cases for up to 25 years and can provide considerable amounts of money.

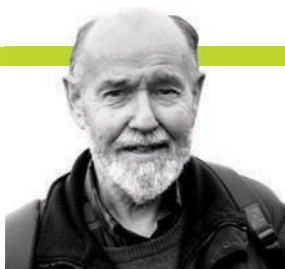
There is no similar contract applying to conservation bodies, even the government’s own agencies, where development is stopped for environmental reasons, and I think this is quite wrong. It means we are not operating on a level playing-field. Windfarm developers can go to local communities and say “we’re going to mess up your environment but don’t worry, we’ll give you lots of money if you say yes” but the conservation bodies have to say “we’re going to stop this development and save your environment, but sorry, there’s no money in it for you”. It’s a one-sided system (and it would also apply to fracking should that ever go ahead).



Wind farm on the Ochils

## Conserving our communities

Roger looks at the role local communities play in environmental issues



### Environment


**Roger Smith**

TGO’s founding editor on the green issues that matter

dramatic but great for recreation, and indeed has a very well developed local footpath network, ironically funded from government sources. The local pressure group, calling itself Save Straiton for Scotland, is fighting hard to reduce the impact of the turbines. The planned developments here would seriously diminish the attractiveness of the area, which with the path network in place had started to draw more visitors in.

There are two things which I believe must happen. Firstly, conservation bodies must ensure they take local communities with them. This means consulting early and often. David Hannah’s accusations are a bit unfair as these bodies, especially JMT, do often work closely with local communities, and do create local jobs where possible (and there is very little evidence of windfarms providing much local employment). But perhaps we need to make the effort to get local people on side before making too many press statements.

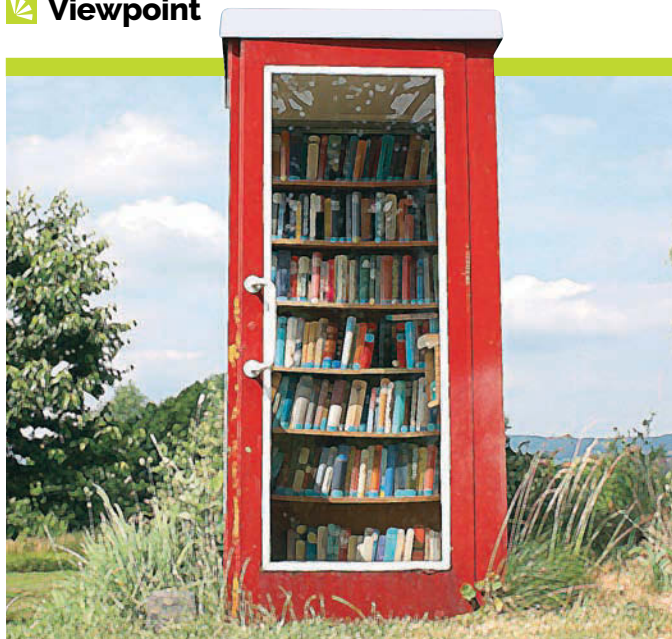
And surely community development funds should be available through conservation projects exactly as they are for developments such as windfarms. If we can go to local people and say “you have a wonderful natural environment here which we want to protect against development, and if you work with us we can offer you long-term support” we have a much stronger case.

The logic of this is blindingly obvious to me, but in our present political climate I don’t unfortunately, see much chance of it happening. Nonetheless, we should continue to press the case. Local people should not have to sell their birthright for a mess of pottage. 

Many local communities are very much against large-scale developments but feel themselves powerless to object when to do so would cut off money which may be vitally important for them. Some people see this as a bribe. It is certainly a temptation which is hard to resist. The balance only tends to tip in favour of conservation in areas which have serious statutory designations such as national park applied to them. Without the backing of these designations it becomes very difficult to argue the anti-development case.

Despite this, many communities are resisting the march of industrialisation. One such is at Straiton in Ayrshire, a nice wee village which could find itself completely ringed by turbines. Straiton lies among pleasant low hills, not





This month

## Heart's Desire

Edward Hoagland

**“...here in this obscure little bypassed valley bursting with undergrowth the illusion of the old hiking freedoms persisted.”**

Jim follows the whim of a wonderful, but largely forgotten, American author who is one of the greats

ANY OUTDOOR LITERATURE devotee will know of the American contribution to the genre. It's vast, transcendent if you'll allow a mild pun. You'll know the names as well as I do: Emerson, Thoreau, John Muir, Aldo Leopold, Edwin Way Teale, Ed Abbey, Peter Matthiessen, Barry Lopez, Rebecca Solnit – outdoor-household names either side of the Atlantic, and for the most part rightly so. Among the body of work they've produced are some of the finest examples of English miscellaneous prose: *Walden*, *The Snow Leopard*, *A Sand County Almanac*, Teale's "American Seasons" tetralogy, *Arctic Dreams*. This month's book belongs with that list, though the author's name is far less well known, particularly in Britain. It's an odd, wide-ranging book – a 'best of' selection from the writings of a man whose most accomplished work is in essay format, and whose themes embrace topics as various as slavery, circus big cats, the Gramercy boxing gymnasium in New York, dogs (about which he writes with gorgeous clarity, humour and compassion) and the midnight freight train to Portland, Maine, as well as "Thoughts on Returning to the City after Five Months on a Mountain Where the Wolves Howled", "Walking the Dead Diamond River" and the best appreciation of Thoreau (apart from Emerson's funeral oration) that I've ever read.

What links together these discursive, frank, elegantly written pieces is constant reference to the mountain country of New England, and a biologist's rich knowledge and awareness of his home landscape and its human and animal inhabitants. If you want tight focus, trenchant information, tales of derring-do, then probably the chatty, rambling, endlessly curious, confessional



### The Hillwalkers' Library

**Jim Perrin**

Literary recommendations  
for hillwalkers with a passion  
for the written word

approach of a latter-day outdoor Montaigne isn't for you. For me, it's an inexhaustible volume to which I've returned time and again over the years: Edward Hoagland's *Heart's Desire* (1988).

To reassure you that what you'll encounter here is the genuine outdoor-exploratory urge, here's a chance passage from an essay that veers between baby-sitters, Black Power in the 1960s, the wharves of New York and planes flying into La Guardia airport:

*"...lately I've tried to discover which is the wildest mountain left in Vermont, from scouting as well as map-reading and talking to people. I think that I have. A jeep could bump to within a mile or two of the east or west base, but nobody happens to climb it. The mountains round about are encountered first, and it's an*

*intricate, broad-topped, low little mountain, a confusion of starfish ridges and high swamps thick with windfalls. Nothing spectacular, no cliffs, waterfalls or fifty-mile views, just lots of forest. Its only distinction is its wildness, and moose, bear, lynx, and coyotes make their homes there. I'm drawn to it and frequently wind towards it in walks, tasting the creeks that run off its sides, getting to know the valleys below, spending the night on mountains nearby so as to look at its contours at dusk and at dawn."*

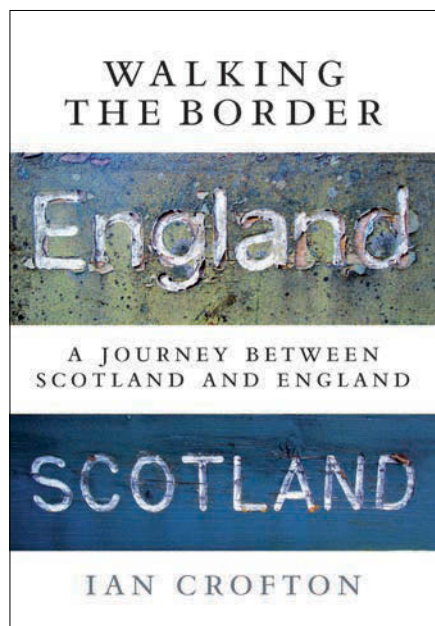
Recognise that impulse? Reading the passage again makes me determined to apply it to hills that tease at my imagination in the places I love: Wales, the Pyrenees, the Western Highlands of Scotland and the west of Ireland, where there may not be bear or lynx but the paradigm of looking closely and looking anew marvellously enriches our experience of landscape.

There's another interesting dialectic in this book that explores the opposing tensions many of us on this crowded island feel between the allure of the urban and its insidious way of unbefitting us for any deep experience of the great outdoors. So Hoagland acts as intermediary, reporting on his own neuroses when faced with unalleviated, unmediated wild nature. That position intensifies his interest in, and aptitude for reporting, the backwoods characters he meets; his book throngs with human vitality, as well as deftly evoked glimpses of wild country.

His phrase-making, resonantly simple, unalloyed by the tortuous synthetics of the creative writing industry, is peerless: leopards that "sometimes spring down, as heavy as a chunk of iron wrapped in a flag." Read and rejoice in what it means to be alive! 📖



## New book reviews



### Walking the Border

A journey between Scotland and England

Ian Crofton

Published by Birlinn, £16.99. ISBN 9781780272078

EARLY IN THE 19TH CENTURY Walter Scott met an American writer who told him, quite bluntly, that the windy borderlands between England and Scotland were both monotonous and unimpressive. Scott must have taken a deep breath before giving his positive response: "To my eye, these grey hills have beauties peculiar to themselves. I like the very nakedness of the land; it has something bold, and stern, and solitary about it." Two hundred years later the region remains largely undiscovered, though recent political shenanigans have forced the borderline into the limelight.

Ian Crofton thought it was time someone looked at the boundary in a bit more detail and, starting by the Solway Firth, he walked eastwards – following the dotted line as precisely as possible – all the way to the North Sea. His journey started by the ancient Lochmaben Stone near Gretna Green and finished on the crumbly east coast near a farm that was appropriately called Conundrum. Along the way, the author quizzed local folk about devolution and such matters, but their differing opinions convinced him that the border is likely to remain a bit of a conundrum for many years to come.

Much of his route was not at all obvious on the ground and it didn't take him long to work out that 'Border miles are triple strength'. The book frequently describes his tussock-bashing

attempts at keeping to the boundary amidst the soggy valleys, trackless forestry and characterful layers of history and legend. The land might have been wet but he often had difficulty finding freshwater and on a couple of occasions he describes how he had to backtrack to find a stream before finally pitching up for the night.

One of his wild camps was up at a lonely place called Deadwater Rigg, near a burn called Rashy Sike, and such topographical poetry echoes across both sides of the border. Parts of the region were once known as the Debatable Lands and the author records a litany of place

names that seem tailor-made to tempt the hiker: Hungry Law, Mozie Law, Wooplaw Edge, Leap Hill, Haggie Knowe, Windy Gyle and Burnt Humbleton. Some locations also provided him with uncomfortable reminders of the lawless raiders who used to strike across the hills: Thief's Slack, Murder Cleugh and Bloody Bush Road. On these high rolling tops he thinks it might even be possible, more than anywhere else, to count the seven receding horizons that were once said to announce the end of the world.

The walk didn't go exactly to plan. Those triple strength miles, with extra added rain, sapped the author's enthusiasm and he opted to skip a section of the Cheviots. A heatwave welcomed him back a few weeks later, but there was then another interlude before he finally reached the east coast. I wish he'd stuck to his guns and battled through the bogs since these breaks inevitably disrupt the storyline.

It would be nice to say the book finishes with a toe-dipping session in the chilly North Sea but a sandstone overhang barred progress and the gathering darkness ruled out an abseil. Despite a few hiccups, it was mission accomplished and the idiosyncratic photos taken on the trek include quirky signs, fences and boundary stones – important waymarks on any journey along the border.

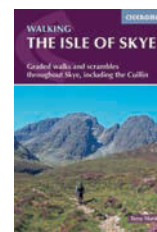
Roger Butler

### Book round-up

#### Walking the Isle of Skye

Terry Marsh

Cicerone, £14.95



The fourth edition of this guide to arguably the most famous of Scotland's islands. It has 87 different walks and scrambles in parts including Sleat, Strath and the Cuillin. Each one has a detailed description along with OS maps and practical information.

#### The Blind Man of Hoy

Red Szell

Sandstone Press, £8.99

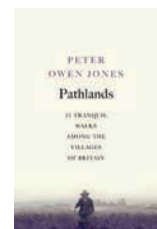


When Red Szell lost his eyesight at a young age he abandoned his dream of reaching the top of The Old Man of Hoy and thought he'd never climb again. In this 'against all odds' account he describes the rediscovery of his ambition after 20 years and his subsequent attempt to tackle the 450ft sea stack.

#### Pathlands: 21 Tranquil Walks Among the Villages of Britain

Peter Owen Jones

Rider, £12.99



Twenty-one circular walks across the length and breadth of the British Isles. The author, broadcaster and Anglican priest explores beaches, fields, rivers and reservoirs, and delights in the sights and sounds he encounters.



Share your views, your experiences and your favourite photos

**Postal address**  
The Editor, The Great Outdoors, Newsquest Specialist Media,  
30 Cannon Street, London EC4M 6YJ  
Please include a phone number and postal address.  
Letters may be edited for clarity or to fit the space available.

## Alpine alarm

I was interested to read Roger Smith's comments on global warming in the March issue. He accurately describes how non-action in reducing greenhouse gas emissions will likely lead to a world where unstable and even extreme climatic change will affect us all. In his article Roger states that if we can hold temperature rises at 2°C then we may avoid the most disastrous consequences of a warming world. Yet we must be aware that our uplands are extremely sensitive to climatic change and will be seriously affected before that figure is reached. Take for example the high Cairngorms – perhaps the most important area for ecology in the UK. It is estimated that a 1°C increase in temperature may reduce the area of alpine habitat by about 90 per cent across Scotland as a whole. A 2°C increase is likely to reduce overall snow cover in the Cairngorms by up to 90 per cent (by raising the snowline 400 metres or more).

Back in 2006, the *Independent* suggested that such temperature changes in the Cairngorms could produce the worst eco-catastrophe since the drainage of the English Fens, or even since the last Ice Age. They argued that nearly all the special species of the Cairngorms – from the ptarmigan, to the tundra-nesting dotterel and snow bunting, the alpine flowers and dwarf shrubs, even microbes and fungi living in the soil – all depend on snow cover. The great rivers of the Cairngorms, without the flood of the spring thaw, may no longer be suitable for the spawning of Atlantic salmon. Increased warming and change in levels of precipitation may also make any planned restoration of native Caledonian forest far more problematic. In this very real scenario, the sub-arctic/alpine nature of the Cairngorms is likely to be lost forever.

Unfortunately, the forthcoming general election is unlikely to include national debates on such issues. Indeed, one leading party is already committed to scrapping the 2008 Climate Change Act. But even those parties dedicated to the Act are faced daily with the endless drive for continued economic growth, all of which will severely impinge on efforts to achieve our carbon emission targets. It is also a sad fact that in a rapidly changing global economy even developed states, such as the UK, are still looking for sources of cheap energy to fuel this growth, regardless of its environmental impacts. The almost panic stricken stampede for releasing shale gas by hydraulic fracturing is predicted to add further to emissions as it is likely to replace existing sustainable forms of electricity generation. Yet we shouldn't be surprised. Market economies, after all, will always choose cheap over sustainable. And the continuing use of fossil fuels still has powerful allies internationally. Vested interests, such as the oil industry, don't give up easily. Already we hear of renewed endeavours to open up the Arctic basin for oil extraction. And of course, an ice-free Arctic would be far more benign for such giant installations.

So we need to be endlessly vigilant if we are to hold governments and corporations to agreed emissions targets. As people who take great pleasure from our wildest places it is our responsibility to do what we can to protect them in these uncertain times. And in the meantime, we can only hope that the Cairngorms are able to retain the special ecological characteristics that are widely recognised as being of international importance.  
Steve Turner

## A call for calm

I usually have a great deal of empathy with the views expressed by Roger Smith in his TGO column and I have written in agreement with his cautious support for the exploitation of shale gas through fracking and with his abhorrence of the desecration of our wild lands at the altar of the wind industry. This month, however, (TGO March) I find myself not totally in harmony with Roger's thoughts on climate change. But, before the eco zealots and climate alarmists denounce me as a 'denier,' I would point out that, like many rational people, I don't deny the scientific evidence of climate change... I believe that the climate has always been in a state of change, but I would challenge the alarmist conclusions and remedies proposed. The people responsible for this generally represent the environmental 'industry' which is exactly what the movement has become and other than their hippy type foot soldiers, they all have a very strong vested interest in promoting the doomsday scenario and their solution; renewables.

A recent example of the deliberately misleading propaganda which these people spout forth was the claims for wind generation in Scotland in November which was published by WWF on 8th December. The claims were carefully worded to give facts which were at best totally misleading and at worst downright duplicitous. This is by no means an isolated example. The entire renewables industry and its funded apologists in the environmental 'industry' are pumping out this sort of deceit on a daily basis.

I believe that the less gullible among the population are beginning to question the absolutely certainty with which these people predict imminent climate Armageddon, when in fact, they know very little about just how far and how fast the climate will change and what the consequences will be. They rely heavily on computer models which have proved to be very unreliable thus far.

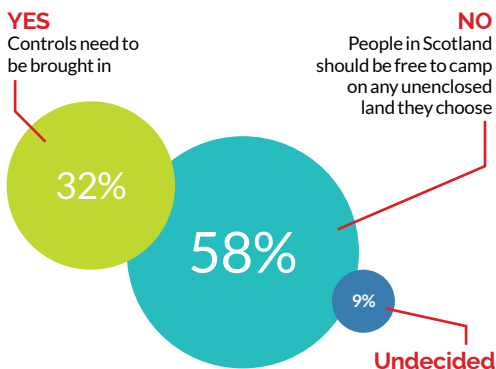
But, even if we accept that the fundamentalists do indeed know it all regarding climate change, the other plank of their creed; 'renewables is the remedy,' does not stand up to serious examination on any level. When they so inextricably link themselves to the 'subsidy troughers' of the renewables industry who are now being rumbled for what they are, their credibility is not enhanced. Those who propose current renewables technologies as the remedy for climate change are offering a useless and possibly dangerous medicine for an obscure condition, for which the prognosis is unknown.  
Alan Thomson

## Do you agree with the proposals to control wild camping in parts of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park?

In 2011 the Park Authority for Loch Lomond & The Trossachs introduced small-scale controls on wild camping in certain areas where vandalism was high. Now, with a proposal to introduce controls on a further 5% of land, many have argued this will be a step too far.

Ramblers Scotland and the Mountaineering Council of Scotland both joined together in opposition. TGO Gear Editor Chris Townsend also threw his hat in the ring, stating in his column in March's issue: "A blanket ban (on wild camping) puts everyone in the same category and is a crude instrument for dealing with the issue."

To find out what our readers thought we posted a poll on [tgomagazine.co.uk](http://tgomagazine.co.uk) asking: "Do you agree with the National Park Authority? Should regulations be introduced to control certain 'hotspots'?"







**WALKING ALL OVER  
HEART DISEASE**

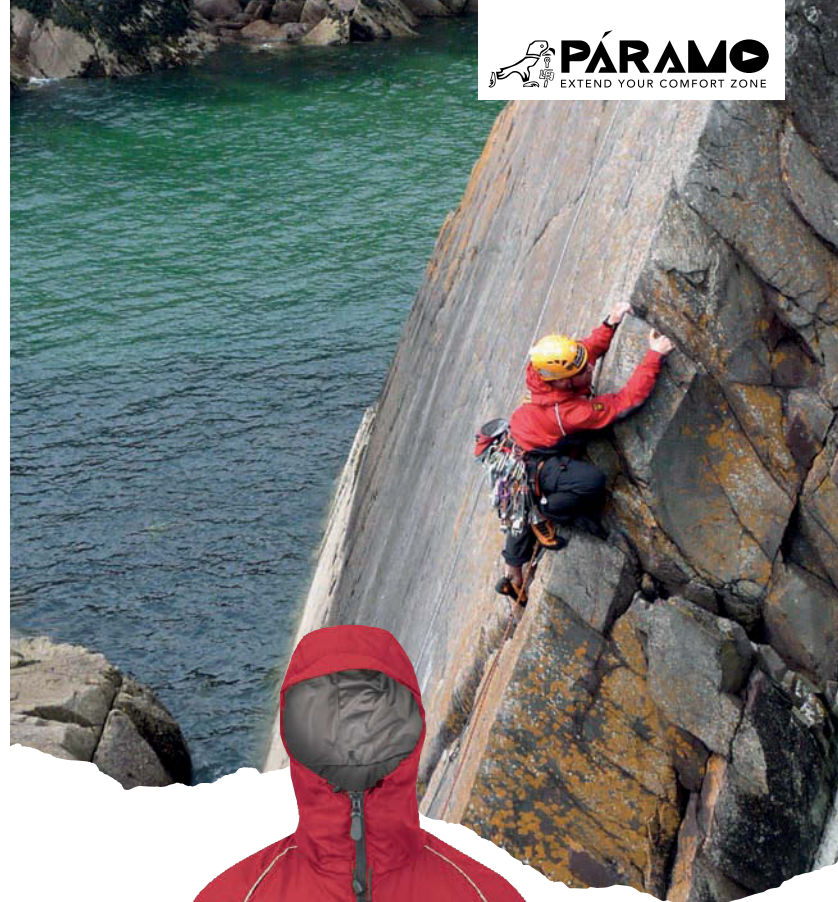
# LONDON TO BRIGHTON TREK



**Weekend of  
27-28 June 2015**  
100km from  
London to Brighton  
non-stop  
**Sign up today**  
[bhf.org.uk/l2btrek](http://bhf.org.uk/l2btrek)

**FIGHT  
FOR EVERY  
HEARTBEAT**

©British Heart Foundation, registered charity  
in England and Wales (225971) and in Scotland (SC039426)



**Quito Jacket**  
£230



Walk amongst  
GIANTS with

**KE**  
ADVENTURE  
TRAVEL

**keadventure.com** 017687 73966

WORLDWIDE TREKKING FAMILY CYCLING DISCOVERY & CLIMBING HOLIDAYS



**Wild Canada**  
Canadian Wilderness Adventures

Bookings taken now for our specialist tours

Nature & Wildlife  
tours suitable for  
Photographer  
&  
Film Makers




[www.wild-canada.com](http://www.wild-canada.com)

## Take a different route

In contrast to other waterproofs, Páramo use uniquely directional Nikwax Analogy® fabrics with more effective moisture control to keep you drier and safer on your adventures.



Our directional waterproofs function better without membranes - our 100% polyester waterproofs survive longer and are fully recyclable through the Páramo Recycling Scheme.

Páramo's effective designs work harder - innovative ventilation plus intelligent features help you focus on your activity.

**Take a different route - find out more about the ultimate  
waterproof clothing system that professionals trust at:**  
[www.paramo.co.uk/analogy](http://www.paramo.co.uk/analogy)





## How To

# Photograph sunrises and sunsets

Everyone likes taking pictures of sunrises and sunsets. Here photographer *Mark Gilligan* explains how to make the most of the golden hour

You will often hear the phrase 'golden hour' used in photographic circles. It refers to the myriad of colours that nature can present to us at sunrise and sunset.

At first light, the dawn of a new day arrives and as a photographer you want to capture this special moment. You are stood there in anticipation as the outline of the distant fell suddenly begins to glow. Sadly, it's over too quickly and as the light increases, the sounds of the day become ever more evident.

Of course, other opportunities do present throughout the day depending upon weather and light, but as sunset approaches, the reverse of the opening salvo takes place.

Even grey dull days can suddenly light up with a spectacular unforeseen glow but we can never predict what colourful lightshow will present itself. If it does then we need to be ready to capture it.

I personally prefer shooting sunrises in the winter months because you get the ice, frosts and occasional inversions decorating the scene too. Of course the other plus is that I can stay in bed longer! Whatever time of year you decide to go out and capture images in the 'golden hour', there are things to take into consideration. Planning is vital.

### Location

Don't just turn up and start clicking away. Go and look in

daylight and find a good vantage point. On your initial 'recce', take a few shots on a compact or your phone to get an idea of composition so it is in your head.

### Interest is the key

Get to know the position of the setting and rising sun. It's obvious but a vital one. Pick a couple of spots to work from that are close, but not too far apart as speed is of the essence. You don't want to be walking around looking for places when the scene is unfolding before you. There is a meteorological phenomenon that takes place at these times too. Invariably the wind drops and stillness pervades adding to the serenity of the scene.

### Equipment and techniques

You will invariably be out in the open, so even in the warmer months take clothing that will do the job. The show develops quickly and you will have to be ready to go. I always carry a good head torch and spare batteries no matter what time of day. That will prove an investment and not just from a safety perspective but practically, locating kit. It will also help when focusing on nearby rocks. Do remember to turn it off when shooting though as your wobbling head will create light patterns across the scene!

Use the camera's manual settings and focus manually too. Again if you're not used to that, practice in





Wast Water sunset

Using the 'big stopper' on Gable and Lingmell as the sun goes down in April



## Whatever time of year you decide to go out and capture images in the 'golden hour', there are things to take into consideration – planning is vital

daylight. Familiarity with your kit is important. Take a tripod along with a remote or cable release as the exposure will be longer, in some cases much longer than usual. Also learn how to use the 'bulb' setting on the camera as it may be you're shooting for a few minutes at a time.

A graduated grey filter of some description will usually be needed to help with the skies. Soft or hard depending upon the vista you are shooting. The time you need for an exposure will change as the light increases or decreases depending upon the time of day.

I always travel with a basic kit and usually use my 24-105mm lens. I may also use the 17-40mm lens. Other than that, it's just the elements and me.

If the lightshow hasn't materialised, I have been known to put the 'big or little stopper' on the lens and portray a different perspective of a familiar scene. It slows the water down even more and creates fabulous patterns with clouds.

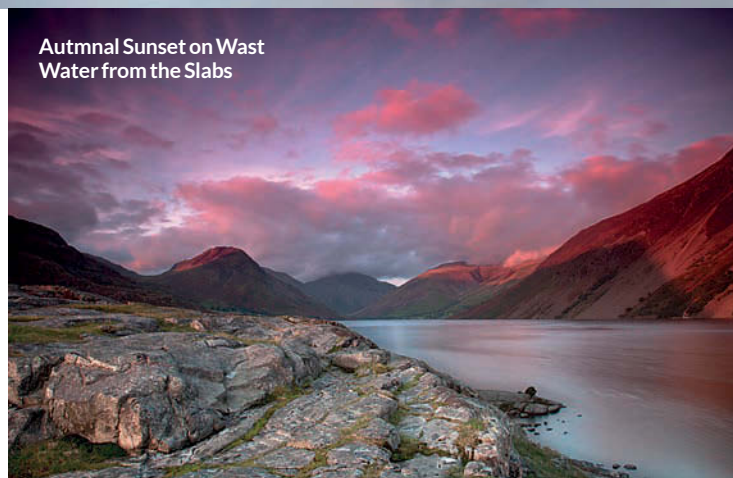
Check that your kit is as weatherproofed as the conditions will allow. Your manual will be a good guide for that.

### Composition and processing

It's a mantra of mine, but it is no good having an image that is technically perfect but compositionally bad. The reverse also applies.

When you recce, look for

Autumnal Sunset on Wast Water from the Slabs



features to give the photo a feel of where you are and what you are conveying. Rocks you have stood by and have noted will change dramatically when the glow of the golden hour arrives and take on a whole new perspective.

Compose the picture in camera and use the viewfinder like the canvas. Getting as much right in camera should be your aim. Minimise your time at the computer by getting it right in the first place. Anyone who has been on my workshops will tell you that is how I work. Processing should

be at an absolute minimum and not the be all and end all. It should be quick, simple, minor tweaks and not a major 'slider fest' where colours and contrasts are over loaded.

### Finally, a word of warning

There is a danger that you might just stand there gawping in awe of what you witness. Trust me it can be truly spectacular and breathtaking. Concentrate and you can show everyone at leisure just what you saw for evermore. It will be worth the effort. [📷](#)





## Accident and illness protocol

In the first of a new series focussing on first aid from Cicerone's book *First Aid and Wilderness Medicine*, authors *Dr Jim Duff* and *Dr Peter Gormly* give a protocol to follow when an accident happens

When suddenly confronted with an accident or severe illness, it is natural to feel anxious and overwhelmed. The protocol described here will help you to follow the correct course of action, arrive at the right diagnosis and give the appropriate treatment.

In a major incident when there are helpers, you, as the lead first responder, should be observing, assessing, delegating and instructing, only becoming involved with a specific problem when unavoidable.

### Accident and illness protocol

1. Take control
2. Primary survey – dealing with life-threatening emergencies
3. Shock management
4. Secondary survey – working out what the problem is
5. Plan of action
6. Treatment
7. Evacuation

### 1. Take control

Stop, and get a grip on yourself, calming down with a few deep breaths while resisting the urge to rush in. Observe the situation.

● **Danger:** Are you, the victim and the rest of the group safe from further injury such as falls, rock falls, avalanche, water dangers, power cables and road traffic? If so act immediately, calling for help and delegating as much as possible.

● **Mechanism of injury (MOI):** Assess what is happening and how it happened. Could there be a neck or spinal injury? If not sure, assume there is. Is there more than one victim (triage)?

#### Approach the victim.

- From below or the side to avoid dislodging rocks, snow etc onto them and so they can see you without turning their head (to avoid worsening a possible neck injury).
- Wear protective gloves.
- Ask the victim, 'Can I help you?'

The response or lack of it, tells you about the airway and level of consciousness. It also provides consent. If they say 'no', go no further. Assume consent if the victim is unconscious, semiconscious, drunk, are 'not of sound mind' ie mental problems. If consent is given (or assumed) place your hand gently on their head to stabilize the neck, ask them to stay still and proceed.

**Note:** there is plenty to consider in this step but it should be accomplished quickly, in seconds rather than minutes, as the next step, the primary survey, is life saving and must be implemented as soon as possible.

### 2. Primary survey – dealing with life-threatening emergencies

Assess and maintain the victim's airway and breathing, giving CPR/ chest compressions if necessary. Stop any life-threatening bleeding.

### 3. Shock management

Reassure the victim and keep them calm. Provide protection from the environment (heat, cold, rain, wind etc). Apply temporary splints to any fractures. Give adequate pain relief.

### 4. Secondary survey – working out what the problem is

Now gather and record all the information you need to make a diagnosis: take a medical history (including the victim's previous medical history), carry out a physical examination, check the vital signs and reconsider the MOI.

### 5. Plan of action

Once the victim is safe, the life-threatening emergencies have been dealt with, shock management is in place and ongoing, and all relevant information has been gathered and a diagnosis made (if you have one!), decide on your plan of action.



Consult your companions, read as much as you can about the problem and seek medical advice by phone, radio, email or messenger. Get the victim's consent, and their opinion on the plan if appropriate.

Now consider and write down your plan of action, which might include some or all of the following:

- all treatments and care you intend to give (wound care, dressings, splinting, medications, liquids, nursing, posture, toilet needs, feeding etc)
- how you intend to continue shock management
- how often and when you will repeat the vital signs and secondary survey
- an inventory of your resources (equipment and skills of your group and what's locally available)
- how medical help or advice will be sought
- how evacuation will be organized and rescue request written
- how you will deal with all the possible things that could go wrong
- statements and copies of notes

from witnesses,


- how you will deal with the needs of the rest of your group: briefings, food, shelter, evacuate/continue, keeping group morale positively directed by assigning jobs, debrief.

Review your plan of action regularly, especially when conditions change. And, for legal reasons, remember the saying: 'if it wasn't written down (preferably as soon as possible), it wasn't done'.

## 6. Treatment

Now it is time to start your non-emergency treatments. If the treatment is ongoing, move the victim into the best possible space (mess tent on an expedition, good room in a lodge etc) as soon as it is safe to do so. Someone may need to stay with the victim during the night; arrange a roster. Record all treatments, vital signs, times, doses etc.

## 7. Evacuation

If the victim's condition is serious, deteriorating, or you or the victim cannot cope with the situation, evacuation will be necessary. 

## MOI – Mechanism of injury

The way an accident happened is a great clue to help work out the type and severity of injury sustained. It is especially important in head and spinal injury. The MOI is also useful when considering fractures, sprains and strains and wounds. Give some thought to the trajectory and weight of any striking object, to the position of the victim's body and how it arrived in the position you found it, and to what vital organs lie under the injured area.

**The MOI should always be considered when making a diagnosis.**



*First Aid and Wilderness Medicine* is published by Cicerone Press. The authors are Drs Jim Duff and Peter Gormly. To buy a copy of *First Aid and Wilderness Medicine* (or any other Cicerone technique book or mini-guide) at a 25% discount please use the code TGO25 on the Cicerone website: [cicerone.co.uk](http://cicerone.co.uk).



 **Snugpak**  
35 YEARS OF ADVENTURE.



Manufacturing insulated clothing and sleeping bags in our West Yorkshire factory since 1977

[www.snugpak.com](http://www.snugpak.com)





Everything you might need for a cold weather camping trip, and yes, it really will all go in

1

## How To

# Pack a canoe

With warmer weather approaching, and the call of the distant shore growing ever stronger, *Tim Gent* offers some tips on how to load a canoe for a camping trip

A large pile of assorted dry-bags, spare paddles, food boxes and folded tarps lies scattered by your empty canoe. How do you pack it all in?

Low and snug should be the mantra, and key to all good canoe packing is placing the heavy bits at the bottom.

Big tents are also best off down here, as are hard-edged and often weighty items such as food boxes. If you're taking a wood-burning stove, this certainly goes in first. Those canoe campers who like to store their kit in large blue barrels need to stow these at the bottom too.

Try to keep as much weight as possible below the thwarts. In brief, anything stowed on or below the waterline helps steady your canoe, while anything loaded above this height will increase any tendency to wobble. The greater the weight of

the individual item, and the higher it sits, the more pronounced the effect. Keeping things low has the added advantage of minimising windage (the action of the wind on your vessel). Unless a helpful breeze is blowing gently from astern, you really don't need something sat up high, acting like a huge sail.

### Keep balanced

For good balance, weight should be distributed evenly across the canoe width. It can be very irritating to push away from the shore, only to find a horrendous list. But then, to avoid an unreasonable strain on your canoe, it should only ever be loaded once afloat anyway, so any balance problems should soon be evident.

I've always preferred to stow the tent and any other heavy

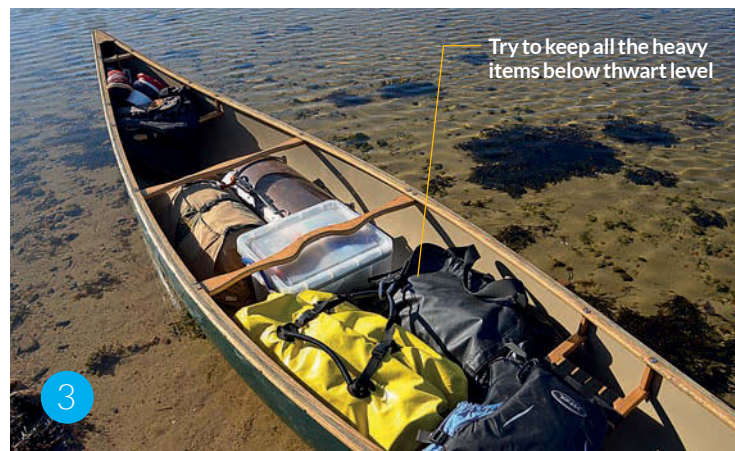
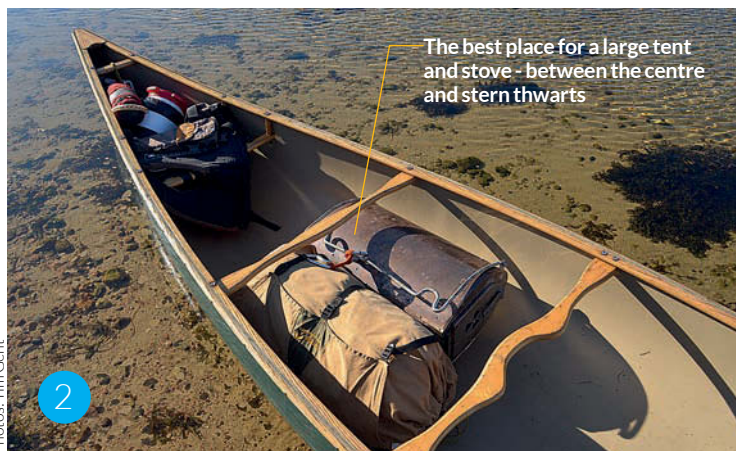
items behind the centre thwart, or abaft if you prefer some nautical terminology. Tucked here, with the stern thwart if you have one on the other side, they will form a good basis for longitudinal weight distribution. In most cases, a slight weight bias towards the stern will help steerage. I admit this can require occasional minor alteration. If you're working into a stiff breeze it might help if the balance of weight is just forward of your canoe's centre point, but this standard distribution is usually fine. Besides, you can almost always pull ashore to adjust your load easily if needs be. Practice is the best way to achieve this balance, but if you compare the waterline with the gunwale you'll soon spot any problems. Just look to see the bow a little higher in the water than the stern.

Long skinny things such as spare paddles and fishing-rod tubes can be wedged alongside the lower layers. Positioning a spare paddle where it can be reached and extracted easily if needed is a good idea. If space is running a little short, light bulky stuff such as groundsheets, sleeping bag rolls and the like can be shipped above the thwarts, tied down tight.

### Keep it secure

Now when it comes to securing your load, there are different ways to hold it all in your canoe. Some people prefer to have everything sat loose in the canoe, tied only to a long attached line. Set up like this, a capsized canoe can be righted easily, and the load pulled to the side and heaved back in – or so the argument goes. This all strikes





## A canoe packed for camping, using plenty of waterproof containers, and with everything secure, may be overturned, but is actually very hard to sink


canoe has a climbers quick-draw clipped to it. This may seem a little extravagant, and these lengths of super-strong tape with a carabiner at each end aren't cheap, but half a dozen or more make for individual security systems that are very easy to attach and remove. As I pack everything in, I just clip it into the next item, working the sling under or around a thwart to help. One of the last items, also attached by a quick-draw, will be a bailer (we use a bucket), clipped within easy reach. I may also attach a throw-bag in the same way to the stern carrying thwart. Small bags or waterproof containers with items that might be needed on the journey, such as maps, sunglasses or water bottles can also be clipped in, either here behind the stern seat, or up close to the stem for the bow paddler. And so to the actual lashing in.

Anyone who enjoys fiddling with ropes and knots needs no encouragement or further explanation from me. If you want to tie in your kit in the traditional manner, please do.

My preference, and one that I find best suits cold and wet fingers, is to employ the cam-straps I use to hold the canoe on the roof of the van. Apart from anything else, you will probably own these useful items already, and it saves carrying ever more kit. Threaded though

the various box and bag handles and straps, and looped under the odd thwart or around a seat strut, everything can be pulled down tight in an instant, and what's more, stays tight. At the end of the journey it even comes apart again quickly – always a useful characteristic of any tie down system.

Finally, before setting out, make sure that once loaded, and that includes any crew, your canoe has at least six inches (30cm) of freeboard – the distance between the water and the gunwale at its lowest point. This should ensure that if the going gets rough, only the minimum amount of water ends up inside your canoe.

Now all you have to do is push off from the shore. Happy canoe camping. 

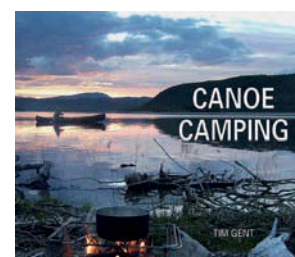
me as fine – in good conditions. To my mind, the problem comes in the sort of situation that's likely to have resulted in an upset in the first place. Having struggled to right an upturned vessel in heavy water, a stiff wind or strong current, possibly all three, the last thing I then want to deal with is a giant lumpy sea-anchor. In anything but the most benign summer stillwater conditions, I prefer to have everything tied in securely.

### Keep it dry

Much of this preference has to do with dry-bags and other waterproof containers. Almost anything that goes into our canoe will be first encased in something waterproof, or nearly so. Not only does this help keep everything dry in the case of rain, but it also

offers an extremely valuable safety feature. If water can't get in, air has almost as much trouble sneaking out. Even if kit is packed pretty tight, a lot of this lighter than water stuff will remain trapped among clothing, bedding or food, and almost all dry-bags and watertight boxes will float, even with some pretty heavy loads. A plastic fishing-rod tube offers perhaps six or seven litres of additional buoyancy. All very handy if things should ever go awry. A canoe packed for camping, using plenty of waterproof containers, and with everything secure, may be overturned, but is actually very hard to sink.

As this makes sense to me – and I've tested it – I don't want things to move. That being the case, and just to be on the safe side, almost everything I put regularly in a



All aspects of canoe camping, from choosing a vessel, to reducing risk afloat and at the campsite are covered in Tim's new book, *Canoe Camping*, published by Pesda Press.





# Gear

Softshells  
p80



78 New gear 80 Women's softshells 84 Trekking poles 90 Top Fives

## New gear



### Fjällräven

#### High Coast Wind Anorak

Part of the Scandinavian manufacturer's new collection of lightweight clothing for spring and summer. This 270g jacket uses a tightly woven synthetic/cotton blend that's said to be windproof and fast drying. It's not waterproof but uses a bit of wax for water resistance, and has a nifty kangaroo pocket that it can be packed into. Other items in the range include shorts, trousers, a wind jacket and a dress.

[fjallraven.co.uk](http://fjallraven.co.uk)



### Vivobarefoot

#### Trail Freak Winterproof

Vivobarefoot is one of the brands providing for the popularity in 'barefoot running'. "Maximum sensory feedback" is the aim of the game, the brand making shoes that are ultra-thin but still puncture proof. Hinted at in the name, this 400g (size 11) model is intended for unfavourable conditions, with 4.5mm lugs for grip, and a waterproof lining under its mesh structure.

[vivobarefoot.com](http://vivobarefoot.com)

### Merrell

#### Allout Charge

An evolution of the Allout Rush model, this 283g men's running shoe is made with country tracks and mountain trails in mind. It has a wide and thick base with two foam shock pads in the mid-sole and multi-directional, 5mm lugs underneath. On top, it uses a structure called HyperWrap to keep the foot in place, and reflective strips for extra safety at night. Comes in bright blue or orange, or in the pretty smart looking black and red pictured.

[merrell.com/UK/en](http://merrell.com/UK/en)



### Berghaus

#### Ortler Waterproof

An interesting new product by Berghaus. The Ortler trouser for men and women uses a stretch softshell outer, combined with Berghaus' AQ waterproof membrane – supposedly making it a "hiking pant for all seasons." We're looking forward to putting this claim to the test this spring.

[berghaus.co.uk](http://berghaus.co.uk)







## Osprey

**Atmos & Aura AG.**

These bags use a suspended mesh ventilation system on not only the back but around the waist as well. Their unique hipbelt will also hug the wearer even before being clipped together. Aside from this brand new technology, they use a pick and mix of features from previous Osprey ranges, such as a big external stretch pocket, a removable top flap and 'Stow on the Go' pole attachments. Both the Atmos (men's) and the Aura (women's) are available in either 50 or 65 litres (£160, £180) and come in different sizes and colours.

[ospreyeurope.com](http://ospreyeurope.com)

## Ecco

**Biom Trail FL**

**£120 660g pair (7)**

[shopeu.ecco.com](http://shopeu.ecco.com)

I've said before that great trail shoes are all about confidence, and these shoes from Ecco – a large Scandinavian company – have them in bucket loads. It's all the more remarkable considering that these are among the first trail shoes they have launched. Ecco won plenty of plaudits for one of its first forays in to the outdoor market with the Biom Terrain mid boot thanks to its 'Natural Motion' technology that uses a last that was developed after scanning more than a thousand feet. Ecco say it makes it stable and very comfortable. The Biom Trail takes this through to a trail shoe. Also notable, and do stick with me through the next couple of sentences, it uses a direct-injected PU midsole. Boots and shoes tend to fall into two categories when it comes to midsoles: EVA or PU. EVA tends to be softer and spongier but can wear down quicker, while PU is generally a bit stiffer. Advocates of PU, among them Keen and Lowa, say that it will last longer. Another advantage is that the direct-inject means it can be shaped for the foot. The disadvantages are they tend to be a little heavier and it tends to feel harder underfoot (although that's far from the case with Keen shoes). All very good, but what does it mean for the wearer?

Well, first on your feet, it certainly feels harder underfoot. If I compare them to a pair of Salomon or, an extreme example, the Hoka One One that has a maxisole (see review next issue), then they are harder. But over off-road distances of 13 miles or so, they felt great. An advantage of the PU sole, and the low-to-the-ground construction (there's a 7mm drop in men's and 6mm for women) means they are very stable and you feel really attached to the ground. They naturally encourage a mid- or fore-foot strike. The shape of the sole also allows for the toes to spread and move – and it's the toes that play a large part in keeping us balanced. They are very positive and stable even on rough terrain. The rubber sole doesn't have a particularly aggressive pattern, but was surprisingly grippy on woodland trails on all but the muddiest terrain. On rock and reasonably dry ground they are exceptional. The uppers are not waterproof – a good thing in my opinion – so they are breathable but also don't keep in the water that goes through those big hold at the top! (Gore-Tex ones are planned for winter 2015) The ones I've been wearing for the last six months partly use Kevlar and are going to be really durable. You can always tell the good ones we review as they are the ones picked up without even thinking about it. For my everyday runs off-road and any less than around a half marathon length these are my go-to shoes.

Daniel Neilson



## TGO's gear reviewers



### Kirk Watson MIC

Height 5'10" Shoe size 10/10.5  
Clothing size XL

Kirk is a Scotsman living in Aviemore who has been hillwalking since he was five and climbing since he was thirteen. He works as an outdoor instructor and holds the Mountain Instructor Certificate, spending most of the winter teaching mountaineering and climbing. During summer he coaches canoeing and mountaineering, and makes films. He's climbed and walked in many countries and spent six years living in Antarctica guiding scientists across glaciers and up mountains.



### Judy Armstrong

Height 5'2" Boot size 3.5/4  
Clothing size 12/Women's Medium

Judy Armstrong has been testing gear for *The Great Outdoors* since 2005 but has been hillwalking and mountaineering for 30 years. Originally from New Zealand, Judy lives in the North York Moors National Park and also has a base in the French Alps.

**THE UK'S  
MOST  
EXPERIENCED  
GEAR  
TESTING  
TEAM**



### Chris Townsend

Height 5'8" Boot size 9  
Clothing size Medium  
(with short legs!)

Chris Townsend has written 17 books on the outdoors, including the award-winning *The Backpacker's Handbook*. Among his walking achievements, he was the first person to complete a continuous round of all the Munros and Tops and the first to walk the 1600-mile length of the Canadian Rockies. Chris has been reviewing gear for *The Great Outdoors* since 1991.



# Women's lightweight softshell jackets

Judy Armstrong assesses a versatile addition to your gear wardrobe

**SOFT SHELLS HAVE BEEN ON A** roller coaster. The early versions, which came out in the 1990s, worked on the 90/10 priority principle, boosting breathability at the expense of weatherproofing. They were stretch woven single layers, where performance came from the fibres, not membranes or coatings: they had a smooth outer face with DWR (durable water repellent) coating to shed moisture and a textured inner face to whisk away moisture vapour (sweat).

Before long they were hijacked by membranes and became heavy beasts which reversed the priority values. Recently, on the crest of the wave which brings all things lightweight, soft shell jackets have reverted to the original: breathability prioritised in lightweight, stretch woven construction.

This breed of soft shell can be a truly versatile addition to an outdoor wardrobe. Intended for year-round use, they are worn over a base layer; some are cut to allow room for a microfleece in cold conditions. In warm weather – anything above 5 degrees Celsius, if you're moving – simply chuck a lightweight waterproof jacket in your pack, and you're sorted. If you're hiking, biking, climbing, scrambling or mountain biking, you should only need to adjust layers if it rains, or if you stop. If it's cold, I add an insulating layer that can go over the soft shell, usually a synthetic insulated or down gilet or jacket.

The crucial thing to remember is the priority: stretch-woven soft shells are highly breathable, but not waterproof. They have a DWR finish that will shrug off dampness but will need refreshing every few washes. Which leads to the big question: the hood. I prefer these

jackets to not have hoods because most of the time it's trapped between rucksack and neck, reducing airflow and trapping sweat. If it's raining or snowing, you still need a waterproof, which has a hood already. A soft shell hood, then, should be close-fitting for wind protection, and able to be worn under a waterproof hood.

Helmet-compatible hoods are great on heavier soft shells which prioritise waterproofing. However, some designers think otherwise: as you can see here, large hoods have been used on surprisingly lightweight, slim-fitting jackets. This dramatically reduces your options: you can't layer under them as they are cut too close, so you can only layer a hoodless garment over, which will get wet in rain, snow or spindrift.

The other question is cut. For reasons I haven't worked out, and given the dimensions of the average Brit, most women's jackets are now designed with long, narrow arms, narrow underarms (where we sweat most, so you'd think a bit of extra space would be handy) and minimal bust room. I have therefore included arm width measurements so you can wrap a tape measure around your own arm, over your preferred layers, and work out fit for yourself. For reference, I also measured some stretch-woven favourites from a test in 2010: Patagonia: 24/19/14, Mountain Hardware: 21/17/14, Helly Hansen 23/17/14. The oldies' arms are notably wider, more comfortable and versatile for layers.

I tested these jackets through winter, spring and early summer, in weather ranging from warm and dry to bitter cold and damp. They were used for backpacking, day walks, scrambling and spring ski touring.



#### Notes:

All jackets are women's specific; sizes are given for men's version, where available.  
**Weight:** from my digital scales, women's Medium/size 12.

**Arms:** half circumference measured in cm with sleeve laid flat: upper arm/elbow/forearm, in same place on each garment.





## Collar

Wicking or brushed linings reduce that 'clammy' feeling on the back of your neck. When the zip is released on a high collar, it forms 'wings' which flap around your face; low collars which reach to or just cover the chin are more comfortable.

1



## Rab

Women's Vapour-Rise Lite Alpine Jacket

£130 298g (size 12)

Rab's Vapour-Rise, including this Lite version, is hard to categorise; I'd describe it as purist soft shell. In place of stretch woven nylons, it uses Pertex Equilibrium (lightweight, flexible, good wind resistance, super-breathable; little water resistance as DWR wears off quickly) as the outside face, with a microfleece (tricot polyester) lining. Crucially, the lining is attached by seam stitching only, so it allows airflow and further enhances breathability. The cut is slim but not narrow (ample bust room): I wear a base layer underneath but no insulating layer as it drags on the brushed lining. Because the fabric is so supple and lightweight, it is easy to layer over. Even the hood can be worn under a waterproof since it is sized to go over a head, not a helmet, so there's no excess bulk. It adjusts easily, has excellent movement and vision, with a wired peak, yet can be comfortably worn under my 3-layer waterproof hood. Pockets buck the trend, with two large, vertical zip chest pockets and another inside - no side pockets mean nowhere to warm hands, but I never found that a problem. A two-way front zip covers my chin but no higher so the collar doesn't get in the way when the hood is down. Velcro-adjusted cuffs and a hem drawcord create closures. This lightweight, slim-fit jacket is truly versatile for year-round, multi-active use. When I need a jacket for a big mountain day, I reach for this (and a lightweight 3-layer waterproof) without hesitation.

fabric, fit, pockets, hood

nothing

**Fabric** Pertex Equilibrium (49g/m<sup>2</sup>), tricot polyester lining **Sizes** 8-16 (men: XS-XXL **Arm** 21.5/17/15 [rab.uk.com](http://rab.uk.com)



2



## Pockets

If you wear a soft shell, you will be carrying a rucksack, so pockets should be accessible above a hipbelt. High, angled side pockets and/or vertical chest pockets are ideal. Pocket linings can be delicate; for longevity, avoid storing sharp or rigid objects in them.

2



## Mountain Equipment

Frontier

£100 405g (size 12)

New this season, Frontier is also available with a helmet-compatible hood (£130). I prefer this version: the lack of hood makes it more versatile. In cold or wet weather I can layer it easily under a waterproof or hooded insulation layer, it's comfortable in warmer conditions because there's no hood at my neck, it's lighter and cheaper. The fabric is lightweight, tough, wind and vaguely water resistant, and properly breathable. Fit is active, long enough to easily cover hips, room on the torso for thin base and fleece layers, arms are narrow but saved by articulated elbows. I found the underarm cut was perfect with a base layer, too narrow for comfort with a second layer. However, because there is no hood, it was easy to layer over the jacket: a synthetic insulated gilet, then a 3-layer waterproof. Sleeves are slightly long on me and the cuffs are not adjustable, with rather loose

elastication under the wrist; the extra fabric bunched up near my palm unless I rolled the cuff back on itself. Side pockets zip down to open and easily clear a rucksack hipbelt, with a small inner mesh pocket at the chest. The two-way front zip has a semi-stiffened stormflap and zips up to the chin (comfortable zip guard). With a little more room under the arms and Velcro tabs at the wrists, Frontier would have scored Best Buy with a perfect 5.

versatility (no hood), fabric

narrow underarms, cuffs

**Fabric** EXOLITE 210 stretch double weave (92% polyamide, 8% elastane) **Sizes** 8-16 (men: S-XXL **Arm** 18/16/15 [mountain-equipment.co.uk](http://mountain-equipment.co.uk)





# **Gear** Women's lightweight softshells



3



## Check for this

### Hood

If you choose to have one, it should move smoothly with your head, have adjustment, a peak and allow peripheral vision. It must be small enough to fit under a waterproof jacket hood. A soft shell hood is often attached to a high collar which creates its own issues.



4

3




## Arc'Teryx

Gamma LT Hoody

£170 |  549g (size 12)

Gamma LT Hoody is the most protective jacket in this test, with adequate length, a good hood and rugged construction. The durable, stretch woven fabric has a smooth outer face which is efficient at shedding water, and a soft, textured inner face shifts moisture and breathes well. It is cut to accommodate layers – I managed a base layer and lightweight fleece under it, although would have liked a little more room under the arms for the second layer. The large hood is built for a helmet but will adjust snugly over a bare head or beanie. It is supple with good movement and vision, and a useful, semi-stiffened peak. Arc'Teryx, who excel at women's garments, have teamed it with a collar of the right height, covering my chin with the hood down, and mouth with the hood up. With the hood down and the front zip partially undone, the collar doesn't flap against cheekbones

or obstruct vision (compare with Berghaus and The North Face). Side pockets zip down to open, and sit above a rucksack hipbelt; there's also a very small inner security pocket. My only gripe: the (long) sleeves cover my fingertips with my arms hanging down, but do not have cuff adjustment, so I need to fold the (rather snug) cuffs back by 5cm. I found this jacket ideal for ski touring and cool weather hiking, scrambling and climbing, although it was less suited to very active use in warmer conditions.

 fabric/hood/length combination, cut

 sleeve length with no cuff adjustment

**Fabric** Burly double weave (46% nylon, 46% polyester, 8% elastane, 275 g/m), DWR coating. **Sizes** XS-XL (men: S-XXL) **Weight** 549g (size 12) **Arm** 20.5/17/13 [arcteryx.com](http://arcteryx.com)



4



## Keela


Liberty

£75 |  510g (size 12)

A slim-cut jacket without a hood, Liberty has the right weight fabric and features to be thoroughly versatile. It falls down in one area: too many seams create a weird fabric overlap under the arms. The fabric is Keela's own Stretch-Tec Advance, a stretch woven blend of tough nylon and Spandex. It has a lot more stretch than most soft-shell fabrics, is highly breathable, with reasonable wind resistance and good moisture-wicking via the soft, textured inner. The DWR was effective, lasting for several washes before needing refreshing. Side pockets are too low for use with a rucksack hipbelt but work well with a mountain biking pack. A fleece-lined collar zips shut under the chin; it's wide enough for comfort although the chunky zip presses on my throat when covered by a zipped-up overlayer. Sleeves are the right length, with Velcro-tab cuffs (I cut off the dangling

thumbloops). Zipped underarm vents with a full mesh panel run from hem to past the elbow; these allow more 'give' in the fit and vent well. The hitch is that these zips, combined with four seams running into the underarm area, create an uncomfortable wedge of fabric just where you don't want it. It's less annoying with the vents open. Fit is slim, made slimmer after washing at 30C (instructions say 40C) when it suffered slight shrinkage. I used this across a wide range of activities and temperatures, layering a gilet and waterproof on top when necessary, always with the vents open for fit.

 fabric, general cut, cuffs, collar

 narrow/seam clash under arms, chunky zip at throat

**Fabric** Stretch-Tec Advance (85% nylon, 15% Spandex) **Sizes** 8-20 (mens: Lynx XXS-XXL) **Arms** 20/15.5/13 [keela.co.uk](http://keela.co.uk)



5

**Check for this****Cut**

Stretch wovens are generally slim-fit. Each brand has a different cut, so check allowance at hips, bust, underarms. For cold conditions, you may need room for a microfleece below your soft shell. Other insulation, such as a synthetic insulated gilet, can be worn over the top.

**Check for this****Cuffs**

Sleeves are being cut ever-longer, so look for adjustable cuffs: slim-line, die-cut Velcro tabs are best. Adjustment is for length not venting; stretch woven should vent sufficiently on its own.

6



5

**The North Face**

Women's Purgatory Hooded Jacket

**£180****420g (size 12)**

I am a standard UK size 12: I weigh 59kg, am 5'2" with a 36A chest. But this size 12 Summit-series jacket was snug at the hips and tight across my back, chest and underarms. With the figure-hugging, lightweight, stretchy black fabric, I felt like Cat Woman. So far, no real problem – but on top of this fast'n'light body, is a helmet-sized, mountaineering hood. TNF said: "The helmet-compatible hood and high collar are necessary for alpine climbing to give protection from wind, spindrift and even light snow showers." In those conditions you also need warmth. Since only (very) skinny women would get more than a base layer under this, the only way is to layer on top – but without a hood, reducing the options to an insulated gilet. Which, let's face it, is unlikely to be sufficient in spindrift (and it would get wet). The dual fabric use is interesting: abrasion-resistant Schoeller (wind

and water resistant) for the hood, shoulders, back and hips, with highly breathable stretch woven (nylon/elastane) side panels across shoulder blades, sides and under the arms to the Velcro-adjustable cuffs. With the hood up, the collar protects my nose; with it down, the one-way front zip covers my mouth. It's overkill on such a slim-fit, lightweight jacket, as if two garments have been grafted together. Sneaky thought: if I could cut the hood and collar off, it'd be a great jacket for mountain biking.

✓ fabric function

✗ big hood/collar versus slim fit/lightweight fabric

**Fabric** Hood, shoulders and body 70D, 229 g/m<sup>2</sup>, 90% nylon/10% spandex Schoeller fabric, brushed back with DWR. Underarms 50D, 125 g/m<sup>2</sup>, 87% nylon/13% elastane, 4 way stretch TNF Apex Aerobic with DWR. **Sizes** XS-L (men: S-XL) **Arm** 19/15/10.5 [thenorthface.co.uk](http://thenorthface.co.uk)

6

**Berghaus**

Women's Pordoi Jacket

**£120****420g (size 12)**

Pordoi has a lot of positives. The lightweight fabric offers breathability, reasonable wind resistance, a hint of water repellence and some four-way stretch. It is quite long, so sits under a rucksack without riding up and, sensibly, has a two-way front zip. Four external zipped pockets are well placed: two vertical chest, and two at the sides. Cuffs sport thumbloops which, in cold weather, are awkward with gloves and, in warm weather, make the non-adjustable sleeves too long. The cut is narrow in the arms, elbows and underarms, allowing room for a long-sleeved base layer only. An integral hood is, in itself, good: supple movement, adjustment, peak, peripheral vision. But it is attached to a high collar which covers my mouth when the front zip fully up. Releasing the zip to allow airflow in warm or active conditions creates high 'wings' which must be trapped under rucksack straps to stop them flapping at my cheeks. The hood, when down,

wedges between my rucksack and neck, which gets clammy. The hood is intended to protect the face and neck but if you need that kind of protection you usually also need some warmth. In these conditions I wore a synthetic insulated gilet over Pordoi, and eventually a waterproof (resulting in hood clash). I'm stumped by the combination of very lightweight fabric for active use, with a hood, very high collar and face guard for cool or cold weather use, and a narrow cut that doesn't allow layering underneath (given that hood clash prevents weatherproof layering on top).

✓ fabric, pockets

✗ narrow arms/underarms, very high collar/hood

**Fabric** Berghaus AF Softshell (166g/m<sup>2</sup>) with stretch (91% polyamide, 9% elastane) **Sizes** 8-18 (men: S-XXL) **Arm** 18/15/12 [berghaus.com](http://berghaus.com)



# Trekking poles

Chris Townsend takes a walk with a new range of trekking poles

**TREKKING POLES CAN MAKE** walking easier, safer and more enjoyable. They aren't essential – they didn't exist during my first two decades of hillwalking and backpacking and I managed okay without them though there were a few trips that would have been far better with them. Nowadays I always use poles on backpacking trips but not always on day walks though I usually carry one as a safety back up (you can limp down a hill with a pole for support if you suffer a foot or leg injury).

Used properly poles can take some of the weight and stress off your legs, reducing aches and strains. On descents they can ease sore knees, on ascents they give more power. They aid balance too. On rough terrain poles make slips and falls less likely and easier to halt if they do occur. I've stopped many a potential tumble with a pole, especially in very windy conditions. Poles can also be used to prod boggy ground to see how deep it is and for stability when fording streams. They also make good tent poles, something I've used them for on my last two long distance walks.

Poles do need to be used properly. There are times when they should not be used too, which is why collapsible poles that can be easily carried on your rucksack are best. To use poles correctly you need to angle them slightly backwards and put pressure on them so they help propel you

forward. The poles should be upright too and not angled out to either side – that just pushes you sideways. With straight-handled poles – which is most of them – put your hand up through the strap from below so you can them push down on it, which is less tiring and more efficient than gripping the handle tightly. In boulder fields and dense vegetation I wouldn't use the straps though. If a pole gets stuck as you're moving you need to be able to let it go so that it doesn't pull you over or jar your arm. When scrambling I wouldn't use poles at all as they can get in the way and could put you off balance. Poles should also be put away on any snowy slope where a fall could be dangerous. You can't stop a slide with a pole. You need an ice axe. You can use a pole in one hand, sans strap, and an ice axe in the other and just drop the pole if you need to self-arrest. However when the snow is thin or the ground is icy and an ice axe wouldn't be any use poles are excellent for keeping your balance. I've crossed the Cairngorm Plateau using crampons and poles when it was very icy but there was little snow.

## Test notes:

Weights and prices are for pairs of poles with baskets fitted. Lengths are minimum packed and maximum extended. All the straps were tried with men's large size medium weight gloves and thick double mitts.



1





## Check for this

### Length

Poles should extend so you can hold them vertically with your arms bent at right angles at the elbows. Poles have a limited length range so make sure you choose ones that are right for you.

1



## Pacerpole

3-Section Carbon

£87

535g



Pacerpoles have been my favourite poles for many years now due to the shaped handles, which I find effective, efficient and comfortable. Designed with left and right grips and angled so you don't have to cock your wrists Pacerpoles give maximum propulsion with less effort and stress than straight-handled poles. The handles don't need to be gripped tightly and there's no need to use straps. Indeed, there aren't any real straps, just thin cord loops to use in places where you might lose a pole if you drop it. Mostly I don't use these. Apart from the handles the poles are standard ones with internal twist-lock adjusters and soft neoprene sleeves below the handles for comfort when holding them lower down. My only dislike with these poles are the internal adjusters as these are harder to use than external ones and they can slip or jam, though this is rare. I'd love to see Pacerpoles with external clip locks.

The 3-section Carbon Pacerpoles are reasonably light and very durable. I've used

them on two multi-month walks when they were also my shelter poles and many shorter trips. The shaped handles aren't a problem for pitching tents or shelters either. I've used them with a number of different ones and they've worked well. As well as coming with a mesh bag, rubber feet and small baskets they're available with an Extra Spares Pack containing snow baskets and extra rubber feet for £93. 3-section alloy poles, weighing 650 grams, are also available with the spares pack for £78. A useful accessory is a camera mount that fits into a Pacerpole handle so the pole can be used as a monopod. This costs £15.

✓ shaped grips, cost

✗ internal twist-lock adjustment

**Length** 65-132 cm **Material** carbon fibre **Grip** moulded thermos-plastic rubber **Adjustment** internal twist-lock **Anti Shock** no  
pacerpole.com

2



## Hi Gear

Strider

£40

550g

Go Outdoors own-brand Strider poles are fairly standard in design with internal twist-lock adjustment. They have an anti-shock insert but this can be turned off, which I would always do, though there is still a little give. The cork and neoprene grips are warm and comfortable and better than the grips found on some more expensive poles. The straps have soft linings and are easily adjusted and long enough for comfortable use with thick mitts. These aren't the most technical poles but they are good value for money. And at the time of writing they're half-price too.

✓ cost, grips

✗ anti-shock

**Length** 65-135 cm **Material** aluminium **Grip** cork/neoprene **Anti Shock** yes, lockable **Adjustment** internal twist-lock  
gooutdoors.co.uk



# Gear Trekking poles

3



4



 Check for this

## Straps

Straps should be easy to adjust in length for use with gloves or mitts and comfortable on your hands as they take most of the weight.

3



**MSR**


Talus TR-3

£110  620g

The latest poles from MSR have a couple of innovative and effective features that make them stand out from other poles. The first is the asymmetrical hexagonal shape of the upper two sections, which means that the sections can't rotate inside each other. I also found that my hand was less likely to slip when holding the shaft below the grip. The second original feature is the adjustment system. All adjustments are with studs that lock positively and can't slip. The bottom section is fixed length with just one stud. The top section is fixed length too but slides up and down the middle section locking into place at 5cm intervals from 105 to 130cm. The adjustment is controlled by a sliding collar below the grip called the trigger release. Pull this up, which can be done with one hand, and the upper section slides over the middle one. MSR says all adjustment can be done with one hand. I found this true when shortening the pole, including all the way to the packed length. Lengthening the pole took two hands however but was

still easy and quick to do. A fair amount of force is needed to pull the trigger upwards – you need quite strong fingers! The Talus poles also have comfortable grips and soft straps with breathable inserts. The latter adjust with Velcro and are, unfortunately, on the short side. I found them okay with medium gloves but getting thick mitts through them was an effort and not something I'd like to do on a cold windy hill.

The Talus poles feel very tough and the adjustment system is very secure. They are a bit heavier and cost a bit more than many poles but the quality is high.

 non-rotating shafts, trigger release, locking stud adjustment

 straps a little short, quite expensive

**Length** 57-130 cm **Material** 7,000-series aerospace-grade aluminium, non-rotating tri-lobe geometry **Grip** plastic **Adjustment** trigger release, locking studs **Anti Shock** no [cascadedesigns.com/msr](http://cascadedesigns.com/msr)

4



**Leki**


Thermolite Antishock

£120  490g

Many, many years ago Leki launched the first trekking poles and they're still one of the market leaders. These poles are lightweight and beautifully made. Adjustment is via an external clip lock that's neater and more compact than most at the top and an internal twist-lock on the bottom section. The latter also houses an anti-shock mechanism. This is stiffer than many but I still dislike it. However there is a version without antishock that has two clip locks and costs £10 less. That's the one I'd recommend. The grips are made from firm foam with a very long extension beneath them which is incised to prevent your hands slipping. The colourful straps are a breathable fabric that is very thin but still comfortable. There's ample room for thick mitts.

The Thermolite Poles are quite expensive but the quality is excellent and they should last well.

 grip, external lock

 antishock, quite expensive

**Length** 69-135 cm **Material** aluminium **Grip** foam **Anti Shock** yes **Adjustment** external clip lock, internal twist-lock [leki.com](http://leki.com)





### Q Check for this

#### Length adjustment

Poles should be easy to adjust and the shafts should lock firmly in place so they don't slip.

### Q Check for this

#### Anti-Shock

Anti-shock is said to absorb some of the shock when you place the pole. I don't find it makes any difference and I dislike the give when you put weight on the pole, which can make it feel unstable, especially on rocky descents.



5



### Komperdell

Expedition Carbon Vario 4

£160

440g

More compact than most poles yet also longer at full extension these four-section poles would be good for those who want to carry them inside a small pack or for travel where they have to go inside luggage and also for tall people who find most poles too short. With a minimum length in use of 120cms they are actually too long for me at 5' 8". However there is a Compact version with a range of 105 to 125cms and an even shorter packed length of 39cms. The limited length range is because only one section adjusts. The bottom three sections screw into each other. The top section has a click-lock and slides up and down the third section. For such light poles they are quite rigid when fully extended and feel quite secure. The bottom section is made from aluminium rather than

carbon fibre. Komperdell says this is for 'additional edge protection for alpine terrains - in 3,000 meters and above'. I guess the designers have never been to the rocky British hills. The poles have comfortable extended grips and straps easily long enough for use with thick mitts. In design and performance terms they are excellent. However they are also very expensive.

✓ adjustment system, grip, short packed length

✗ expensive

**Length** 45- 145cm **Material** upper sections carbon, lower section Titanal aluminium alloy **Grip** foam **Anti Shock** no **Adjustment** external clip lock, screw-together sections [komperdell.com](http://komperdell.com)

6



### Helinox

Passport TL130

£130

390g

The Passport TL130 poles are the lightest poles reviewed and also the most compact when folded, making them ideal for packing in a rucksack or travel luggage. They have five sections. The three lower ones don't telescope into each other but fit together with plastic tipped plugs and shockcord which is tightened when the second to top section is pulled up to a locking stud. The top section has an internal twist-lock and enables the pole to be extended from about 117 to 130cms. The shortest length is a little long for me so these are best for people over 5' 8". The shafts are a smaller diameter than on other poles and they do bend very slightly when weight is applied unlike with the other poles tested but still seem pretty tough. The grip is

comfortable and has an extension. The strap is narrower than most but still feels okay. It's long enough for use with thick mitts.

If packed length and low weight are important these poles are a good choice. They are expensive though.

✓ compact

✗ expensive

**Length** 37.1-130 cm **Material** DAC TH72M aerospace alloy **Grip** EVA foam **Anti Shock** no **Adjustment** locking stud, internal twist-lock [helinox.eu](http://helinox.eu)







## Check for this

### Handles

The grip should be comfortable to hold. However it should rarely be necessary to hold the poles tightly so this isn't crucial.



## Check for this

### Baskets

All poles come with small baskets, which are fine for use other than in deep snow. Then wider snow baskets give much better support.



7




## Mountain Warehouse

Hiker

£32  630g

Mountain Warehouse's own-brand Hiker poles are the heaviest poles tested but also the least expensive (and currently available for £20, making them great value for money). As you'd expect the design is fairly standard with internal twist-lock adjustment. There is an anti-shock spring that can be turned off with only a very slight movement left. The grip is on the small side so these are not poles for those with big hands. The webbing strap isn't as comfortable as softer ones and can rub a little. It has a buckle adjustment and can easily be opened up for big mitts.

 cost

 anti-shock

**Length** 64-135 cm **Material** aluminium **Grip** plastic  
**Anti Shock** yes **Adjustment** internal twist-lock  
mountainwarehouse.com

8



## Craghoppers


Super Lite Shock Absorber

£50  550g

Despite the name these poles are more average weight than super light, not that I think that matters. They are conventional in design with internal twist-locks and an anti-shock spring. As usual this can be turned off but also as usual I'd rather it wasn't there in the first place. The cork and foam grips, very similar to the Hi Gear ones but with a short ribbed extension, are very comfortable as are the soft lined straps which are roomy enough for use with thick mitts. The baskets are a bit bigger than those on other poles – better in soft mud and snow but more likely to catch in rocks.

Overall these are perfectly adequate poles. The price is reasonable but the similar Hi Gear and Mountain Warehouse poles cost less.

 grip

 anti-shock

**Length** 64-135 cm **Material** aluminium **Grip** cork/  
neoprene **Anti Shock** yes **Adjustment** internal twist-lock  
craghoppers.com





### Check for this

#### Weight

I don't think weight matters with poles unless you'll be carrying them on your pack for long periods. I can't tell the difference between poles when using ones of very different weights in each hand.

### Check for this

#### Care

Pole sections should be separated after use so they can dry. It's best to store them like this too so that they don't corrode and jam.



10



11

9



## Komperdell

C3 Carbon Powerlock

£100

460g

These lightweight carbon fibre poles have excellent compact clip locks that snap firmly into place. Although lighter than most poles they also extend further, making them a good choice if you're tall. The foam grips are soft and comfortable and have short extensions. The lined straps are also comfortable and can be easily used with thick mitts. Unusually the baskets don't screw onto the poles but click into place on two studs. I didn't find this very secure and managed to lose both baskets on my second day out with the poles. I guess I hadn't secured them enough. This is something to watch out for.

The C3 poles are high quality but also quite pricey.

✓ external click-locks, grips, maximum length

✗ baskets can work loose, quite expensive

**Length** 69-145cm **Material** upper sections carbon, lower section Titanal aluminium **Grip** foam **Anti Shock** no **Adjustment** external clip locks  
komperdell.com

10



## Terra Nova

Trail Lite

£44

590g

I think the Trail Lite's are the best of the sub £50 poles reviewed. In fact, I think they're better than some of the more expensive poles. In design they are very similar to the Anatom Explorers with the same easy-to-use chunky clip locks and the same baskets and tips. The grip is the same too but there's no extension. The strap is different however, being wider and made from a soft fabric rather than lined webbing. The grips and straps are comfortable and the latter are usable with thick mitts. Overall I think these are the best value of all the poles tested.

✓ clip locks, cost

✗ nothing

**Length** 62-5-135 cm **Material** 7075 aluminium alloy **Grip** EVA foam **Anti Shock** no **Adjustment** external clip locks  
terra-nova.co.uk



11



## Anatom

Explorer

£70

550g

The Explorers are excellent poles at a reasonable price. They have chunky external clip locks that are easy to operate with gloves on and which lock firmly on the shafts. To prevent them jamming – not something I've experienced with clip locks – the brass screws are anti-corrosive and self-lubricating. The grips are made of comfortable foam and have ribbed extensions. The webbing straps have soft linings and easily adjust to accommodate thick mitts. 📏

✓ external clip-locks, grips

✗ nothing

**Length** 62-135cm **Material** 6000 aircraft grade alloy **Grip** EVA foam **Anti Shock** no **Adjustment** external clip lock  
anatomfootwear.co.uk





## Winter essentials

See *The Great Outdoors* March 2015 for the full reviews

### Winter boots

#### Hanwag

Alaska GTX

£235/2200g

"A very comfy boot that moulded to my feet quickly and was warm, waterproof and worked well in the mud."

### Crampons

#### Grivel

G10 New Classic

£115/820g

"Superb crampon attachment system easily adjusted at home or on the hill in a white out."



### Scarpa

Manta PRO GTX

£300/2150g

"The soles have good grip on snow, rock and mud making them a great mountaineering boot and good also for a bit of scrambling."

### Grivel Air Tech

New-Matic

£130/1100g

"It's a sharp aggressive crampon which gives great grip on snow, ice and rock. Great mountaineering crampon which can also be used for a bit of climbing."

### Edelrid

Shark Crampon

£140/900g

"Flexibility unlike any other crampons I know of. It comes with soft, semi and automatic bindings, meaning it can fit onto B1, B2 or B3 boots."

### Ice axes

#### DMM

Raptor

£110/664g

"A heavier weight than others... but if you're going out intent on cutting steps and stances it can't be beaten."

### La Sportiva

Nepal Cube GTX

£420/2180g

"It performs well, giving you confidence on hard snow/ice and is made with high quality materials and looks the part."

### Petzl

Sarken Crampon

£160/980g

"Good for ice climbing and also excellent in snow/névé. A higher end crampon for people wanting to get onto steeper terrain."

### Goggles

#### Julbo

Bang OTG double lens goggles

£70

"Worn in varying conditions and not once steamed up on the inside, which is a testament to a good goggle."

### Petzl

Sum'Tec

£140/495g

"The trigger finger was useful for short sections of steep ground and it worked well in belays as it's shape is not too extreme. A great mountaineering axe."

## Insulated jackets

See *The Great Outdoors* March 2015 for the full reviews

### BEST BUY

#### Berghaus Ramche Hyper

★★★★★ £230/193g (L)

"Astonishingly light given the warmth, which is the same as other jackets weighing well over twice as much."



### RECOMMENDED

#### Black Diamond

Hot Forge Hoody

★★★★★ £280/448g (M)

"Uses Primaloft down blend: 70% water-repellent down/30% Primaloft. Price is quite high but the weight is reasonable."

### RECOMMENDED

#### PHD

Hispar K Series

★★★★★ £533/560g (M)

"1000 fill power down jacket designed for -25°C. I've never before come across anything like this at this low a weight."

### RECOMMENDED

#### Rohan

Icepack

★★★★★ £125/370g (L)

"I've worn it all day on very cold days in the Cairngorms and stayed warm."

### RECOMMENDED

#### Sherpa

Nangpala

★★★★★ £250/44g (L)

"Warm, comfortable and breathable. One design flaw and that is the lack of a volume adjuster for the hood."

## Mid-size backpacks

See *The Great Outdoors* March 2014 for the full reviews

### BEST BUY

#### Lightwave

Fastpack 50

★★★★★ £115/1120g

"In my opinion still the best combination of weight, durability, comfort, features and price."



### RECOMMENDED

#### Gossamer Gear Mariposa

★★★★★ £170 + £25 for hipbelt/825g (M and with hipbelt)

"For the weight the Mariposa is excellent. At less than 900g you have a pack suitable for backpacking."

### RECOMMENDED

#### Vango

Boulder 45

★★★★★ £45/1320g

"The best of the sub £100 packs reviewed, and it makes a good year-round day pack."

### RECOMMENDED

#### Nigor

Zero G

★★★★★ £135/1050g

"The Zero G is lightweight but tough, as it's made from Dyneema, one of the most durable fabrics for packs."

### RECOMMENDED

#### Kelty

Redwing 50

★★★★★ £110/1400g

"As a hillwalking pack this is well-designed. It's aimed at walkers rather than climbers."



# ULTRALIGHT OUTDOOR GEAR

Gear for trekking, backpacking and adventure travel



END of SEASON SALE

New Spring Lines now in stock for Men and Women!

We have an extensive range of Clothing and Equipment for both Men and Women. Featuring **Rab, Montane, Exped, MSR, Mountain Hardwear** and many more! Our gear is hand-picked for performance and quality with focus on lightness.

Shop online at [www.ultralightoutdoorgear.co.uk](http://www.ultralightoutdoorgear.co.uk) or call us on **01740 644024** for help and advice on products, trips and events.

## New guidebooks, new challenges – CICERONE

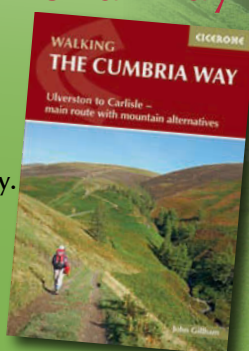
### NEW The Cumbria Way

by John Gillham

Ulverston to Carlisle

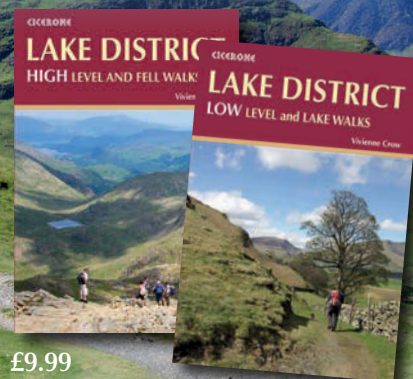
An easy week-long walk exploring the delights of Cumbria's beautiful scenery.

Describes the main route, with suggested alternatives over the high fells for a more challenging walk.



### NEW Lake District guides:

Low level and lake walks  
High level and fell walks



£9.99  
30 walks in each book

Also published this month:

Tour of the Bernina

Chamonix to Zermatt (new edition)

Tour of Mont Blanc (new edition)

John Muir Trail (new edition)

Walking in the Wye Valley



accurate • detailed • respected

[www.cicerone.co.uk](http://www.cicerone.co.uk)





# Wild Walks

10 varied routes around the UK to enjoy this month



## Keswick weekend away

Will Renwick goes high and low around the Lake District town of Keswick



Walked by  
**Will Renwick**

IT WAS NIGHT, AND A STORM WAS RAGING when I arrived in the Lake District from London. The situation was reminiscent of the scene in the film *Withnail & I* in which the main characters arrive in Cumbria having “gone on holiday by mistake”. Thankfully, the difference was that I had a warm hostel for the night rather than a cold, leaky farm house – and I wasn’t suffering from a hangover.

The next morning the storm had vanished and Keswick was serene; a gentle layer of snow just starting to settle. The 931-metre

top of Skiddaw – my target for the day – was hidden above the clouds, but the weather didn’t appear menacing and the forecast looked good. I began my ascent.

By the time I had rounded behind the mountain via a long, crag-topped valley, I had hit the cloudline and arrived on a mist and snow covered plateau. I clambered for shelter around a spooky youth hostel that was shut for the winter and lonely in the moorland.

It was one of those ‘touch and go’ moments when I reached the peak of Skiddaw. This is in





View from above Ashness



Sun on Derwent valley



Ashness Bridge

**It was one of those 'touch and go' moments when I reached the peak of Skiddaw, meaning that I touched the trig point and left the top as quickly as possible**

the literal sense, meaning that I touched the trig point and left the top as quickly and as safely possible – it was near blizzard conditions.

I continued back down through the white, and soon the clouds cleared to show the rest of the Lake District. The evening sun was angled against the distant peaks of Borrowdale and Derwent fells to accentuate their sharp edges, and the lake


with its scattered islands was calm below.

The next morning, my Wainwright-ticking hostel roommates scattered off throughout the park to tackle Scafell Pike, Helvellyn and other challenges. I planned to take it easy, staying low and local on a walk around the edge of Derwentwater.

I started with a gentle stroll through the woodland, enjoying the lake appearing in glimpses through the trees, but then I saw Cat Bells – a sort-of pocket-sized, snow-topped mountain ridge. “If I’m here to enjoy the lake I might as well get a good view of it,” I thought.

With that easily scrambled, I rejoined the

lake and was soon at the pontoon where I had planned to catch the boat back to Keswick. However, yet again the white mountains drew me in. I was then on my way back uphill, deciding to follow Walla Crag and the fell tops to town via the pretty Ashness packhorse bridge (used recently by the British tourist board to advertise walking holidays... in Wales).

Then I was stood above the town as the snow on the surrounding slopes turned a late evening shade of blue and streetlamps invited me down to cosy pubs to close the weekend. I had no regrets that my lakeside amble turned out to be more of a hill-bagging ramble. 



1

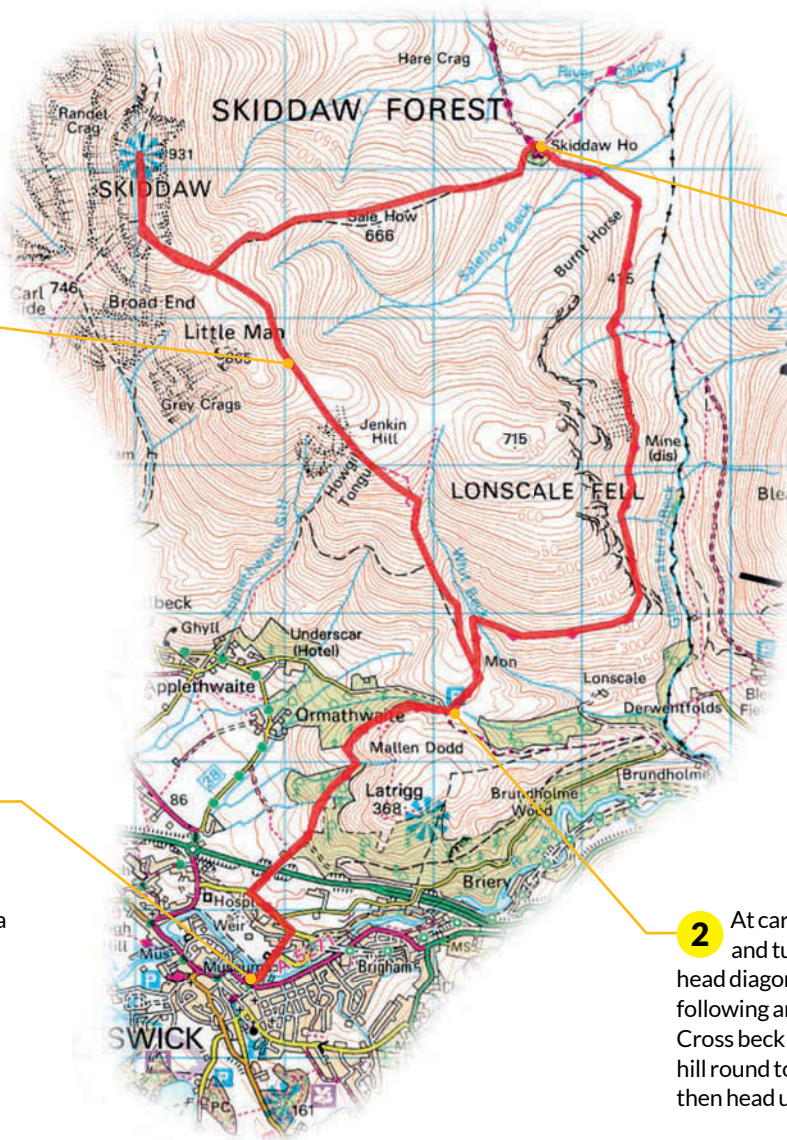


19½km/12 miles/6 hours

Ascent 850m/2788ft



## Skiddaw via Glenderaterra Beck, Lake District **ENGLAND**



**4** Follow the path downhill for around 2km back to the car park and retrace the same route back down to Keswick.

**3** Continue for roughly 3km to the youth hostel on the plateau. Follow wall behind it and turn R to head W and directly uphill to Sale How. Go straight over it and up to the ridge top. Turn R to stile, cross and head uphill. Continue straight along the soon flat hilltop until trig point. When reached, turn back and retrace steps back to stile. Cross and follow ridge top to the next stile.



### Start/Finish

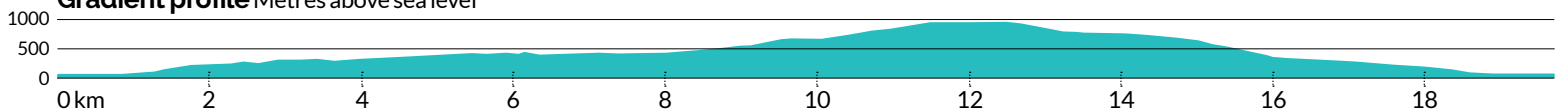
Keswick Youth Hostel

GR: NY267235

**1** Turn L out of hostel and go over bridge following road R around hotel. Take the footpath on R edge of road and join the Cumbria Way, continuing with it straight uphill. When the path splits after a bend, keep on L track, crossing a stream and continuing along a fence and felled woodland on L.

**2** At car park head R to gate, cross and turn L uphill. At next gate head diagonally through the field following arrow for Cumbria Way. Cross beck and walk around edge of hill round to Glenderaterra Beck to then head up through the valley.

### Gradient profile Metres above sea level



### Further information

**Maps:** OS 1:25,000 Explorer sheet OL4 (The English Lakes: North-Western Area); Harvey 1:40,000 British Mountain Map (Lake District).

**Transport:** Virgin Trains run from London to Penrith throughout the day, seven days a week, and have a journey time of around 3 hours (08719 774 222, virgintrains.com). National Express coaches run to Keswick itself from various locations including London

(08717 818 181, nationalexpress.com).

**Local transport:** Keswick can be reached throughout the day via X4 and X5 buses from Penrith Station (including on Sundays). 01900 604588 Stagecoachbus.com

**Accommodation:** The author stayed in Keswick YHA (0845 371 9746, [yha.org.uk](http://yha.org.uk)). Beds start from £11 and rooms from £29. For more options and for other information about the area visit [keswick.org](http://keswick.org)

Resting on the way down Skiddaw





2



18km/11½ miles/5½ hours

Ascent 658m/2158ft



## Derwentwater hilltop circular, Lake District **ENGLAND**



### Start/Finish

Keswick Youth Hostel GR: NY267235

**1** Turn R from hostel and take road to town centre. Walk R down the high street, following it W out of town. After crossing the bridge turn L into playing fields. Follow the path on their edge and at road turn L over footbridge. Continue straight along the road, following it L at junction by The Chalet. After Nichol End Marina go L onto footpath. Continue through woodland on the Cumbria Way. At the kissing gates go across the lane and follow footpath along the wall, crossing a cattle grid.

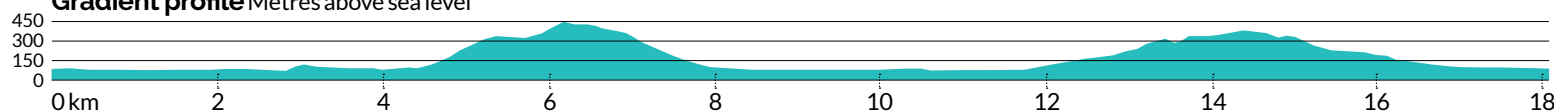
**2** Take the path zigzagging up Catbells and follow along the ridge top to summit and over. At the footpath crossroads turn L downhill. Halfway downhill turn R and join the lower path, turning R on it. Join the road and turn R, then after 100m turn L onto footpath. Turn R when path splits and go through the reserve along edge of the lake. Turn L on main road then R behind hotel. Lodore Falls are near on the R, but turn L to follow path alongside road until the jetty.

**4** At viewpoint go down over stile and L to follow wall downhill and into the valley. Cross bridge to road by farm. Turn L and after 100 yards go L again and back across stream. After mast keep L of stream and follow road back down straight into town centre.

**3** The walk can end here by catching the boat bus. To continue, rejoin the road and take lane up behind hostel and follow uphill to Ashness bridge. Take footpath on L just before bridge. Go through stone wall and take middle track uphill. Continue on to corner of wood and follow woodland edge to Lady's Rake viewpoint.

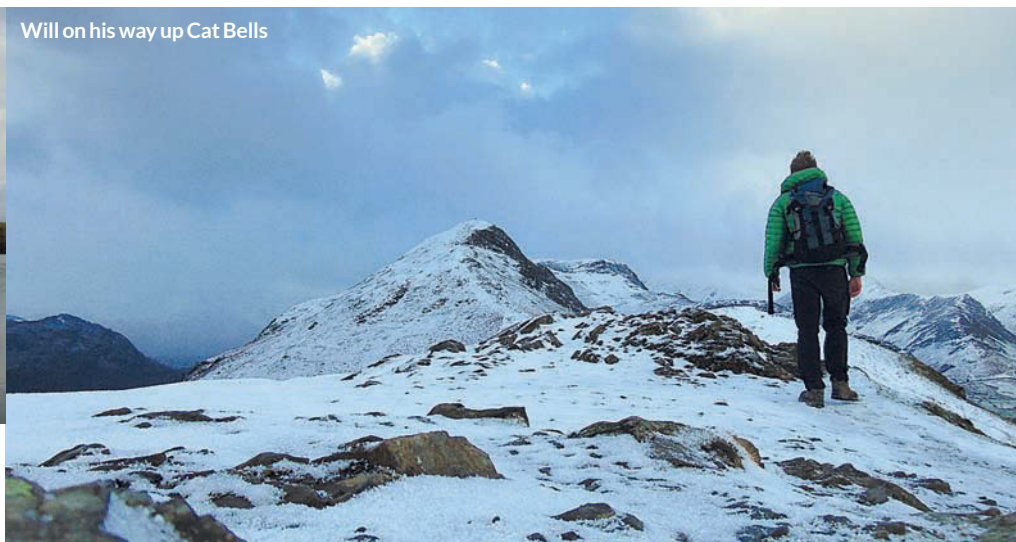


### Gradient profile Metres above sea level



On the edge of Derwentwater

Will on his way up Cat Bells





# THE BIG ACOUSTIC WALK

## 11-12 APRIL



Join us at the National Mountain Centre for a fun-packed weekend of guided walking and acoustic music.

Two nights accommodation, meals, guided walking and open mic nights for only £160.

Walk all day and sing, perform, play, or just sit and tap your foot each night.



Plas y Brenin, The National Mountain Centre, Capel Curig, Conwy LL24 OET Tel: 01690 720214 Email: [info@pyb.co.uk](mailto:info@pyb.co.uk)



[www.linkedin.com/company/plas-y-brenin](http://www.linkedin.com/company/plas-y-brenin)



[www.facebook.com/plasybrenin](http://www.facebook.com/plasybrenin)



[www.twitter.com/plasybrenin](http://www.twitter.com/plasybrenin)



3



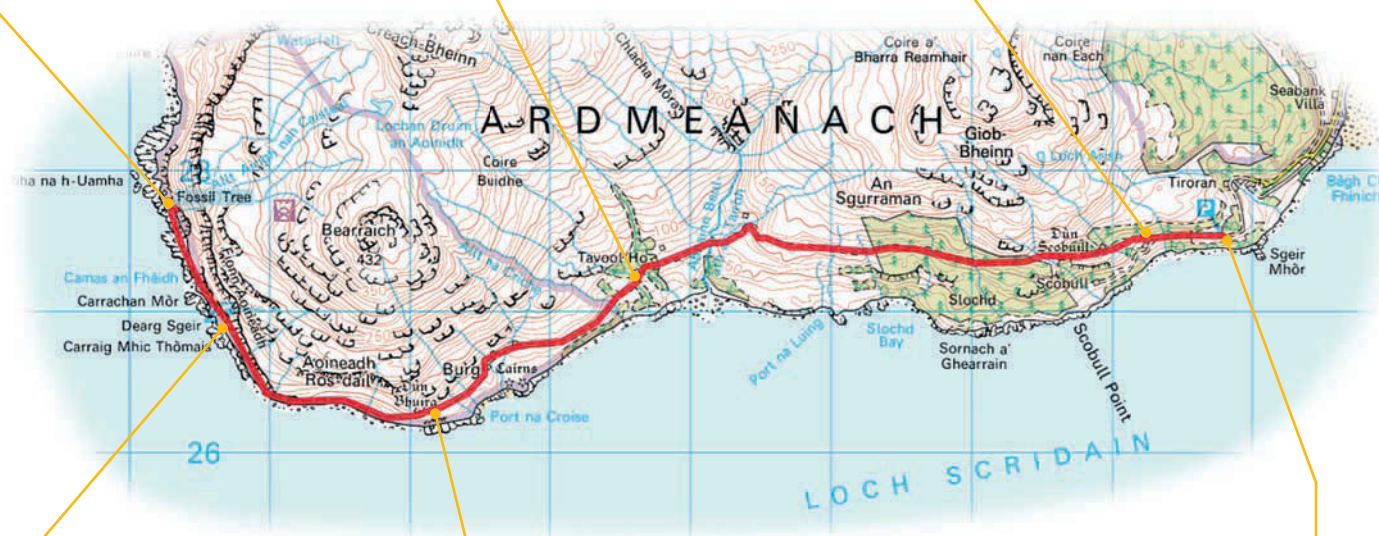
19km/12½ miles/7 hours

Ascent 470 metres/1550 feet



## Isle of Mull, Inner Hebrides SCOTLAND

- 6** Return to Tiroran by same route. **Check tides before setting out as these can limit access along the shore beyond the ladder.**
- 3** Follow track around Sof house and continue W to Burg. Go past house to reach isolated bothy.
- 2** Continue on track across moorland and through forestry and descend to cross river to reach Tavool House.



- 5** Descend ladder and slopes to reach shore and walk N, past waterfalls, to reach fossil tree in the last section of cliff before coast become inaccessible.

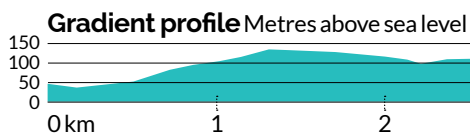
- 4** Take path below cliffs to descend to sea level and walk W. Path ascends grassy slopes, then contours above sea to reach iron ladder (hidden from view when walking out to the fossil tree).



### Start/Finish

National Trust for Scotland car park at Tiroran GR: NM477275

- 1** From car park at Tiroran (on track beyond hotel) walk W and fork R uphill after 500m.



Walked by  
Roger Butler

## Wilderness coast

THE REMOTE ARDMEANACH peninsula on the Isle of Mull, where a rough interior is surrounded by a wild and often inaccessible coastline, is aptly known as The Wilderness. Paths are few and far between, but a lonely trek along the southern shore ends by the famous isolated fossil tree. This primitive conifer was engulfed by ancient

volcanic eruptions until, just 50 million years later, it was spotted by geologist John MacCulloch in 1819.

The walk out to the tree is best treated like the climb to a summit, since once you're there it's difficult to go much further and, one way or another, you're going to have to retrace your steps. Don't let that put you off though, because

the walk offers seascapes to die for as well as Mull's very own version of a rusty via ferrata.

Our track helped tell the story of what is now an empty quarter. A cluster of wayside cairns marked the spot where the coffins of past generations were rested on their way to burial, the tiny old schoolhouse was tucked into





A series of dramatic waterfalls tumble from the basalt cliffs on the approach to the fossil tree


the trees like something from Hansel and Gretel, and the ruins of deserted villages were surrounded by the ridge and furrow patterns of their former lazy-beds.

Beyond the remote cottage at Burg the track became a narrow path which corkscrewed down to a wide coastal amphitheatre and the remains of another old settlement. Beyond here we climbed over steep flower-clad ledges to emerge above a tall and vertiginous iron ladder that was fixed above its crumbling predecessor. A couple of rungs were missing so with care, and one at a time, we stepped down towards the wild stony shoreline. This was the realm of King Billy, with herds

of wild goats clattering across huge pebbles as rainbows danced in the cataracts tumbling over the cliffs.

Large basalt columns formed rosettes which spread above the waves like the sticks of a fan, while another radiated out and resembled the spokes of a wheel. The fossil tree nestled in a cove at the end of the bouldery beach, its stump leading upwards to the 12 metre high impression the trunk once cast in the distorted cliff. We clambered on, over wedges of hexagonal lava, until jagged overhangs meant we could go no further.

Dusk was already in the air as we climbed back across the moorland, where a couple of ghostly short eared owls drifted and pirouetted like well trained ballet dancers. They seemed oblivious to our presence and we treated their aerobatics as a special performance which had been rehearsed just for us.

The moon was now throwing silver light over Loch Scridain and tree roots suddenly became tricky obstacles in the gathering darkness. Head torches helped lead the way back to the start and our beams caught a herd of red deer careering through the fields near Tiroran. 

Words & Pictures: Roger Butler



At the top of the iron ladder, with the beaches, cliffs and waterfalls leading towards the fossil tree in the background

### Further information



**Maps:** OS Explorer Sheet 373: Iona, Staffa & Ross of Mull



**Transport:** Caledonian MacBrayne ferry from Oban to Mull. See [bowmanstours.co.uk](http://bowmanstours.co.uk) for details. Check local bus departures.



**Information:** Craignure TIC (01680812377)



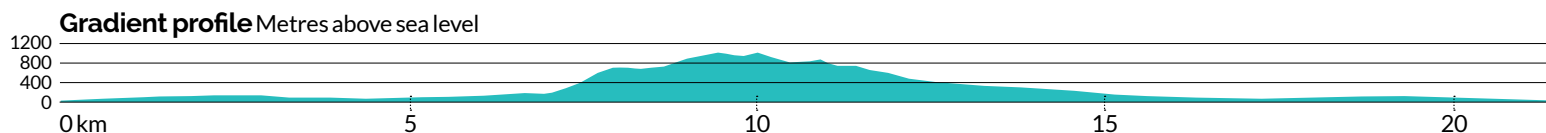
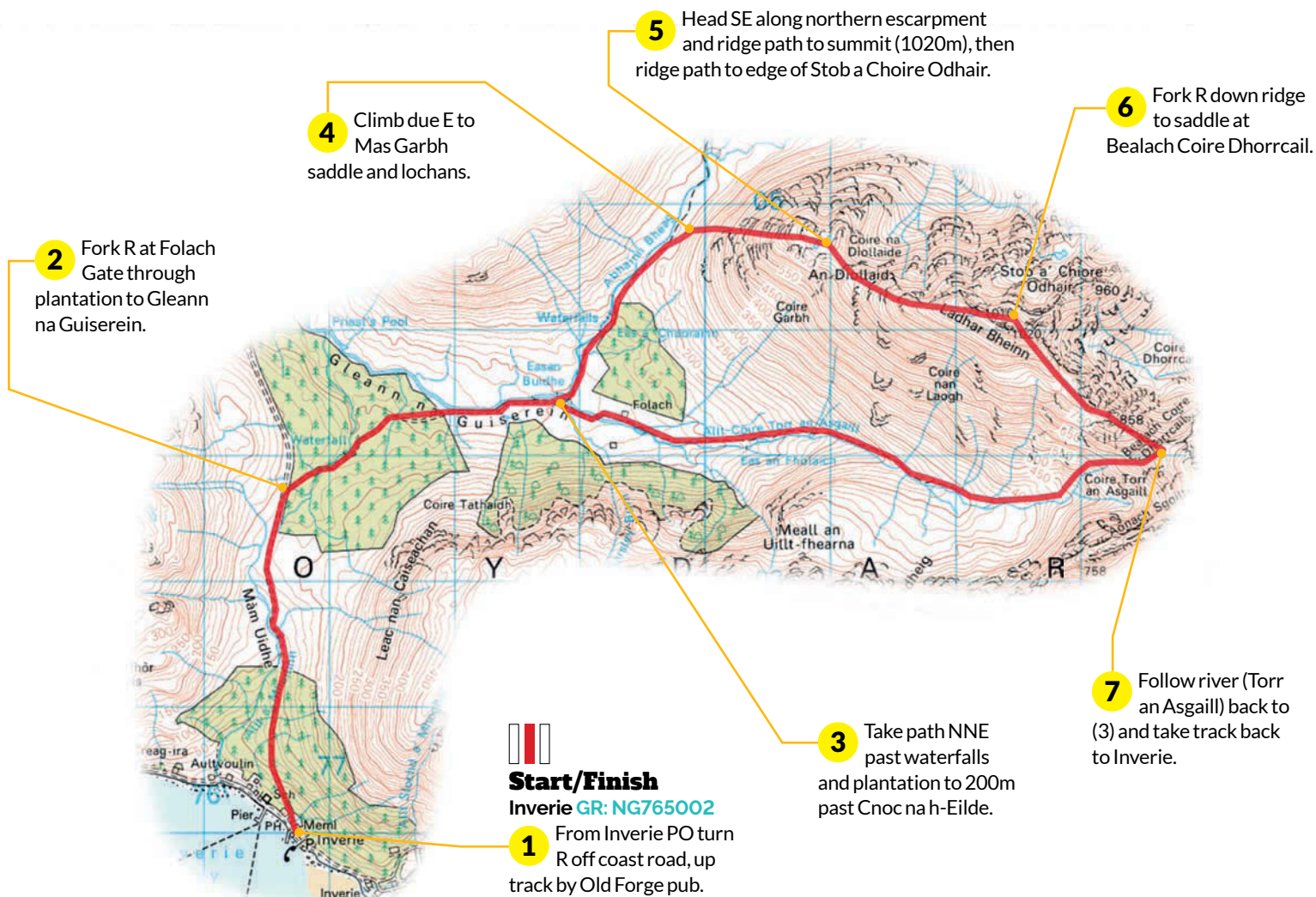
4



24km/15 miles/9 hours

10-11  
without bikes

## Inverie to Ladhar Bheinn, Knoydart SCOTLAND



Walked by  
**Steve Eddy**

### Views of Knoydart

THE FORECAST WAS MIXED, but this was our day for climbing Ladhar Bheinn (pronounced Lar Vein – Hill of the Hoof). What's more, I'd spotted a sign in the Knoydart Foundation window saying: 'For Mountain Bike Hire, find Tommy.' (Knoydart's like that.) Now the bikes were ours for the day, ready to take

us to the foot of the mountain.

We took the Inverie–Invergusaran track, branching off at Folach Gate. After a saddle-sore but speedy three-quarters of an hour, we crossed a bridge over the Abhainn Bheag river, and left our bikes in a ruined farmhouse. Doubling back on foot to the confluence of the Abhainn Bheag

with the Allt Coire Torr an Asgail, we took the path north-east, past birch-bordered waterfalls. Cloud hung ominously over Ladhar Bheinn, so we kept to the path past the mound of Cnoc na h-Eilde to where we could follow the compass due east to the saddle at Mas Garbh.

We made for a dry ravine beyond an outcrop, while an





Jutting overhang with view to Barrisdale

### Further information



**Maps:** OS Explorer 1:25,000 map 413 (Knoydart, Loch Hourn and Loch Duich)



**Transport:** Train to Mallaig; 30-minute ferry journey to Inverie. See [knoydartferry.com](http://knoydartferry.com)

invisible cuckoo's call floated up from the glen. From here it was a straightforward ascent to Mas Garbh. On the map, this is a distinct and relatively level area with several small lochs. From a distance, too, it forms a clear saddle before the final ascent. However, by the time we reached it, cloud hung shroudlike all around, and we had to navigate round mini-bus-sized boulders, only occasionally glimpsing rising ground ahead. The misty lochs were eerily unruffled, like something in Arthurian legend. More practically, they confirmed that we were heading in the right direction!

Beyond the last lochan, we found a cairn, and even a short stretch of path. Then we were out onto a different terrain, fairly steep, but smooth and grassy. Off to our north we glimpsed

the unforgiving drop of Coire na Diollaide plunging away. The land also fell away to the south, and in a while this broad stretch narrowed to a path that tightly hugged the northern escarpment. Snow banks now clung tenuously to the slope.


Through the mist we finally picked out the trig point, at 1,010 metres, and ate lunch, imagining how spectacular the views would be if only the cloud would lift. Oddly, the actual summit, at 1,020 metres, is further on. The path to it is narrow – we had to edge past some other walkers, and it continues to a distinct fork. Here, one hump-backed ridge leads to Barrisdale, while the other, which we took, winds south-east down to Coire Torr an Asgail. Just as we started down, the cloud began to lift, and we were blessed with views of a sunlit Barrisdale Bay basking



View up path from Bealach Coire Dhorrcail

below. The ridge path levelled out briefly to a jutting overhang, where the views were all the more ravishing for being momentary.

Following the ridge to the saddle of Bealach Coire Dhorrcail, and then two red deer hinds, we kept to the north bank of the river,

which has carved a dramatic ravine for much of its descent. Of course, by the time we reached our bikes, the cloud had evaporated, and the summit of Ladhar Bheinn, where we'd lunched in the mist, was bathed in evening sunlight. 

Words & Pictures: Steve Eddy



5



10km/6 miles/4 hours

Ascent 730m/2395ft



## Meall Lighiche, Western Highlands SCOTLAND



**3** Continue SW along on track for a further 1.5km before turning west to cross Allt na Muidhe and follow faint path for 300m before climbing up the southern ridge to reach Creag Bhan.



### Start/Finish

By road GR: NN118565

**1** Follow the track that runs south along the west bank of Allt na Muidhe to cross a bridge after 1km.

**2** Walkers are requested to by pass cottages on a roughly constructed bogy path that emerges a little further down the track near the farm

**4** The ground levels out here as the ridge turns west to reach the summit of Meall Lighiche after another 600m. Return via the ascent route.

### Gradient profile Metres above sea level



Walked by  
**Paul Sammonds**

### A tonic from the doctor

AT THE START OF THE WALK UP Gleann-leac-na-muidhe you are confronted with the impressive and impossibly steep looking nose of Aonach Dubh a' Ghlinne. The southern flanks stand at a marginally shallower incline and provide a stamina testing route up onto the ridge that wends its way round to give access to Sgorr na

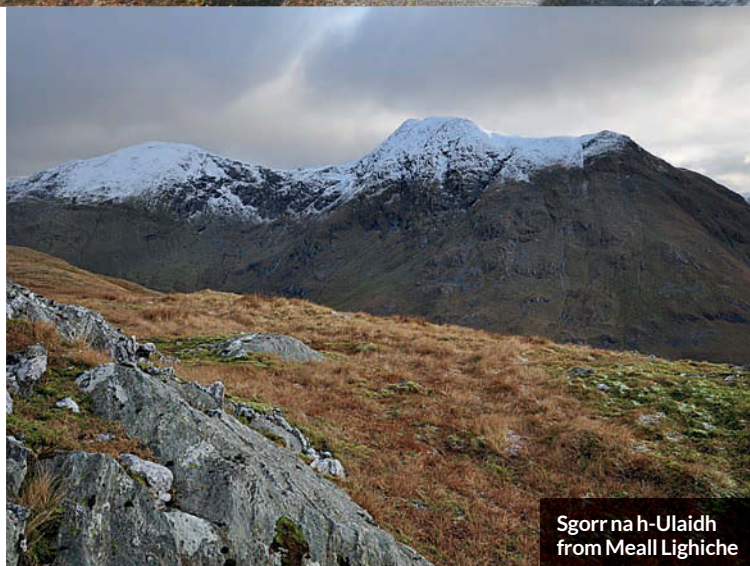
h-Ulaidh. Looking back down the glen you are greeted with a view of the serrated tops of the Aonach Eagach ridge with its similarly sheer slopes. The Allt na Muidhe flows down from the slopes of Sgorr na h-Ulaidh to join forces with other burns at a point where the path starts to turn south, it was here that I headed west across the

burn to pick up the lower part of Meall Lighiche's northern ridge. The wind was gusting strongly so I decided to keep off the crest and follow a line on the west side which provided steady sheltered progress up the grassy hillside. I eventually climbed onto the ridge just after the minor top of Creag Bhan to be greeted by the full force of





Sgorr na h-Ulaidh, Creag Bhan & Allt na Muidhe



Sgorr na h-Ulaidh from Meall Lighiche



Gleann-leac-na-muidh

## Further information

**Maps:** OS 1:50,000 Landranger sheet 41 (Fort William & Glen Coe); Harvey Superwalker (Glen Coe)

**Transport:** Citylink Glasgow to Skye bus (service 915) passes start of walk. Local bus from Fort William to Glencoe village.

**Information:** TIC Fort William 01397 703781

the icy wind. The ridge turns west from here and follows a slight incline to the summit that I'm sure normally provides a relaxing finale to the climb, today however I had to battle with the wind just to stay on the path. There was fortunately some shelter to be gained behind some rocky outcrops near the top and my first job out of the biting wind was to don a few more layers. Reasonably comfortable I had lunch as a number of hail showers passed over temporarily obscuring some

fine views of Sgorr na-Ulaidh and Beinn Fhionnlaidh to the south. I thought the wind had eased somewhat until I approached the part of the ridge immediately prior to it turning south and again felt its force. I felt warm enough apart from my hands as the wind quickly set about sinking in its icy teeth as if my gloves had been stripped away. This was quite painful until I gained some added protection and warmth by retracting my hands into the comfort of my sleeves from

where they quickly recovered. I kept to the ridge line as it undulated its way down to the glen below avoiding one or two small crags. The hillsides around the mountains of Ballachulish were illuminated brightly as the clouds broke slightly while rushing across the dramatic skies. I was soon back on the track that would take me all the way back down to the main road at the end of an entertaining days walking up the Doctor's hill. 📍

Words & Pictures: Paul Sammonds



6

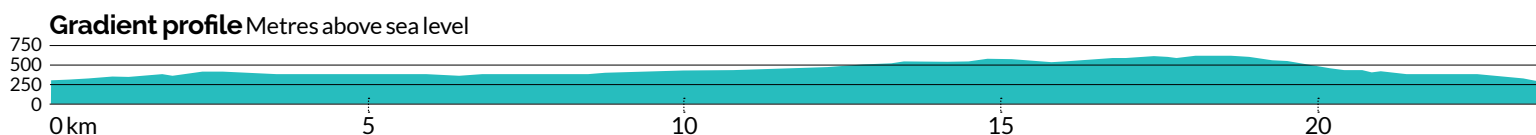
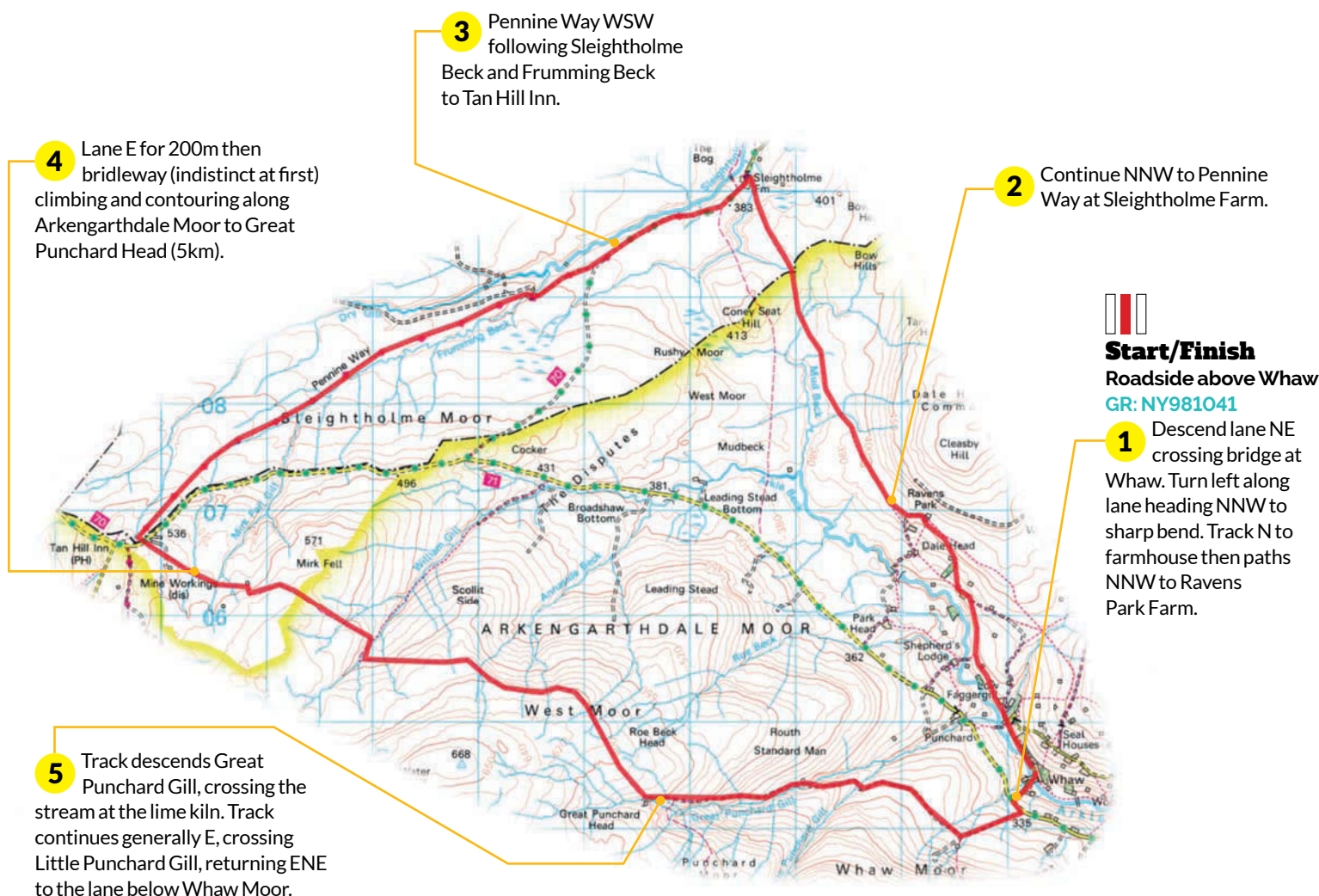


24km/15 miles/7-8 hours

Ascent 565m/1850ft



## Upper Arkengarthdale, Yorkshire Dales **ENGLAND**



Walked by  
**Ian Battersby**

### Concrete fields and walls of feather

AT DAYBREAK IN WHAW THE farmer was loading feed for hardy sheep scratching at meagre winter pastures. Without wind, conditions were ideal for a wander into winter. Frost feathered along walls and branches, and nipped at lowland grass, while weak sunlight browsed golden summits. Penetrating cold gripped a land whose leaning

fields were daubed with thick ice where the run-off had frozen hard, and progress without crampons was variable making it difficult to escape circling sheep craving the hay round after a lingering night of ice.

Unbroken sky brightened into blue as rounded moon paled towards a milky horizon. Ravens

Park Farm looked abandoned by all but a timid goat that squeezed past to avoid being cornered in the yard. The farm is set among fields under Cleasby Hill, and looks across the dale to a broad sweep of heather crowning Arkengarthdale Moor.

The path dropped, then turned to accompany Mud Beck





Tan Hill Inn in snow

upstream into a shallowing vale. The name proved its worth. When my path dwindled I tried crossing the stream to test the bridleway on the other side and paid the price, breaking between tussocks of bog grass into peat that oozed beneath thin frozen crust. Valuable winter daylight was wasted in frenzied effort to keep dry. I should have stayed with the path as far as the Pennine Way, which I joined at Sleightholme Beck, following a tributary upstream, where the land swept up to Britain's highest inn, Tan Hill, barely visible walking

into blinding low midwinter sun.

Inside I peeled off layers, sank into a sofa, and fuelled up on a hearty meal. A young driver had turned his car on its head in icy conditions and the police called in to have a word. It was time to leave these worldly problems. With ebbing sun heading for night the land was already beginning to blush through its final hour.

According to the map a bridleway climbs and contours along the edge of Arkengarthdale Moor, but the map was leading me on. I couldn't find the path in snow scattered over this higher ground. Instead I improvised a passage following sheep tracks and shallow divisions of heather, zigzagging to uncover the route. After a mile of this I found it, quickening the pace over West Moor while dusk weighed heavy over hill and dale.

Great Punchard Gill punches down through the moor, leading back into the valley along an easy track that passed imposing lime kiln remains, lost in shadow, as the first stars pierced a darkening sky. 📍

Words & Pictures: Ian Battersby

### Further information



**Maps:** Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 Explorer sheet OL30 (Yorkshire Dales Northern & Central areas); OS 1:50,000 Landranger sheet 92 (Barnard Castle and Surrounding area)



**Transport:** Too remote



**Information:** Reeth, 01748 884059; Richmond, 01748 850549



Shepherd's Lodge, Arkengarthdale





## Black Rhadley and Heath Mynd, Shropshire ENGLAND

**4** Cross lane onto bridleway but then turn R after 100m. Walk SW over Grit Hill and Milk Hill to reach top of Mucklewick Hill (open access). 0.5km south of top go over stile to follow paths down to A488.

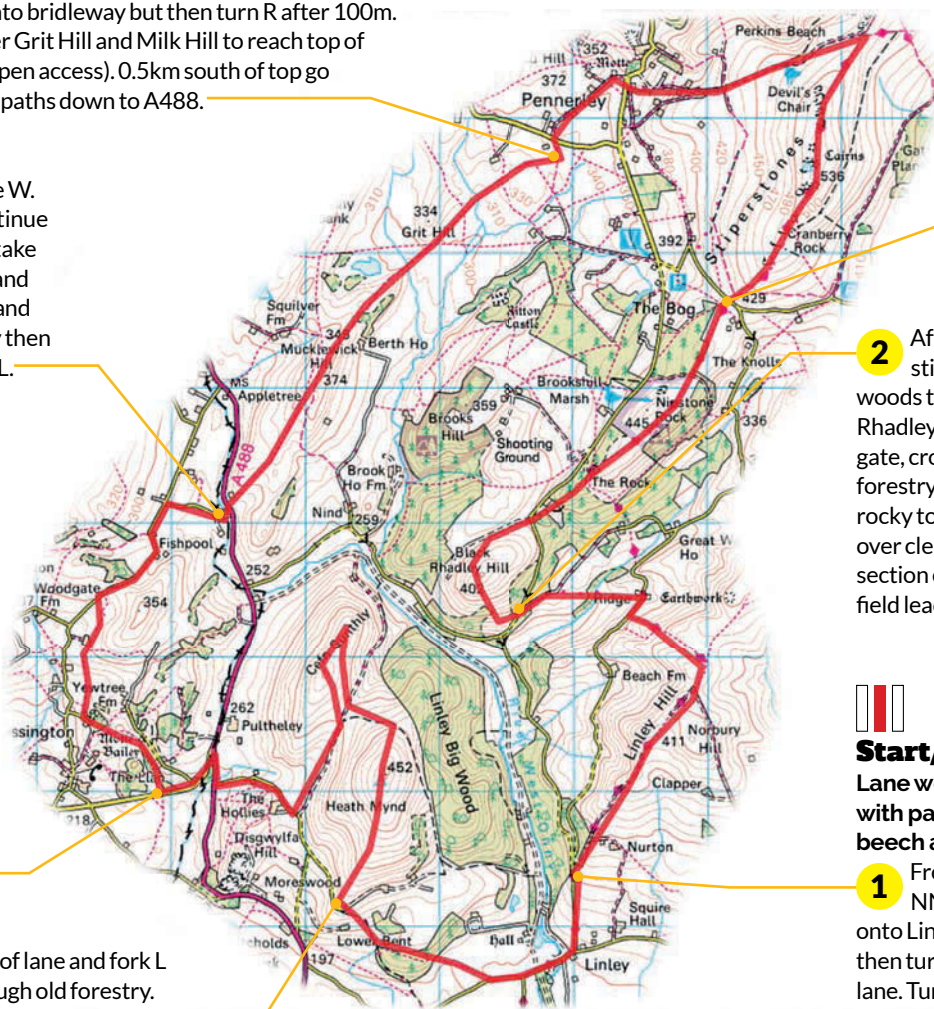
**5** Cross road and take lane W. Turn L at T junction, continue on lane for approx. 1km then take path on L leading S to church and castle mound. Go past house and take path dropping into valley then woods to reach lane and turn L.

**6** Continue to A488 and turn R for 250m. Take lane on L climbing across southern slopes of Cefn Gunthly. After 800m take grassy track on L leading to col between Cefn Gunthly and Heath Mynd (both open access). Climb W after gate to reach Cefn Gunthly, then backtrack and take path around N of Heath Mynd. At high point turn R to summit, then continue SSW to reach lane.

**7** Take track on other side of lane and fork L after 300m to pass through old forestry. Descend to field and take path to reach lane. Turn L, then L again after 700m to return to start.

**3** Cross lane and take path N along main Stiperstones ridge. After 2.2km turn L on broad track to descend to houses at Pennerley. At road, turn L then take track ahead and follow this to next lane.

**2** After short distance go over stile on R and climb through woods to open summit of Black Rhadley. From top descend NE to gate, cross lane and take path into forestry. Leave forestry before first rocky tor and continue NE on paths over cleared ground. Enter short section of forestry, then cross open field leading to lane.

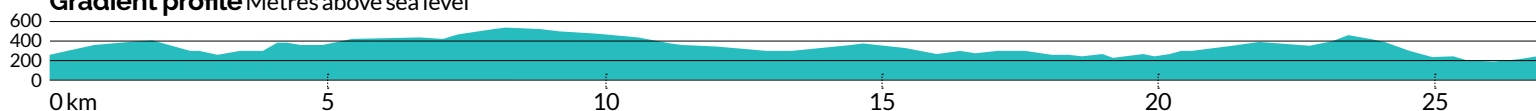


### Start/Finish

Lane west of Norbury village, with parking spaces by start of beech avenue GR: SO350934

**1** From parking space take track NNE (through beech avenue) onto Linley Hill. Continue for 2km then turn L to drop down to narrow lane. Turn R, then immediately L before farm on permissive track to reach ford. Take track W to reach lane and turn L.

### Gradient profile Metres above sea level



Walked by  
**Roger Butler**

### South of the Stiperstones

THERE ARE PLENTY OF undiscovered corners in Shropshire's secret hills, but maybe none so quiet as the tumbling contours south of the Stiperstones, where a conspicuous avenue of mature beech trees led the way up Linley Hill. The weather-beaten trees, visible from several miles away, were planted after

the Napoleonic Wars to provide work for local men returning from military service and it was good to see substantial replanting had recently taken place. Recent sub-zero nights had transformed a nearby scatter of molehills into miniature mountains capped with individual dustings of ice.

I climbed onto Black Rhadley

and, from just below the summit, peered into the deep West Onny valley. A bizarre monkey puzzle made me jump, but the real puzzle was how it successfully flourished amidst the patches of quartzite scree. Looking north, I was amazed to see how the southern end of the Stiperstones had changed in recent years. Under a project



called 'Back to Purple' a cloak of dark forestry had been swept away, allowing long lost rocky tors to rise above what is now regenerating heather moorland. Walking across the cleared areas I spotted many features now once more enjoying the light of day, including dry stone walls, crumbling hedgebanks, ancient holly trees and the remains of old mine workings.

There was a decent coating of snow on the highest parts of the ridge and I enjoyed the view from the Devil's Chair before heading down to Pennerley. A fungal disease is hitting the bilberry bushes around here and, to prevent any possible spread, walkers are asked to scrub and

disinfect their boots on leaving the open land. The bottle of spray was frozen solid today, but I used the brush as effectively as I could.

Paths led past the shy Shelve Pool and onto Mucklewick Hill. This is a perky little top, but its tiny cairn implies not many folk come this way. They miss a great view south and I counted nine horizons stretching away into the Clun Forest. Below the northern end of Corndon Hill was a strange spread of inter-war houses, dotted around a grid of lanes. Is this what our countryside might have looked like if we hadn't passed the planning laws?

I briefly entered Wales, where a network of paths led to the grassy slopes of an old motte and bailey castle. Once back across the border, noisy rooks beckoned me up Cefn Gunthly and, as I'd now come full circle, I looked north across the valley to Black Rhadley. The monkey puzzle was casting a long shadow and there were still patches of frost on Linley Hill. I romped up Heath Mynd for the sunset, then descended past some old gnarled oaks whose silhouettes resembled an army of prehistoric creatures. 🗺️

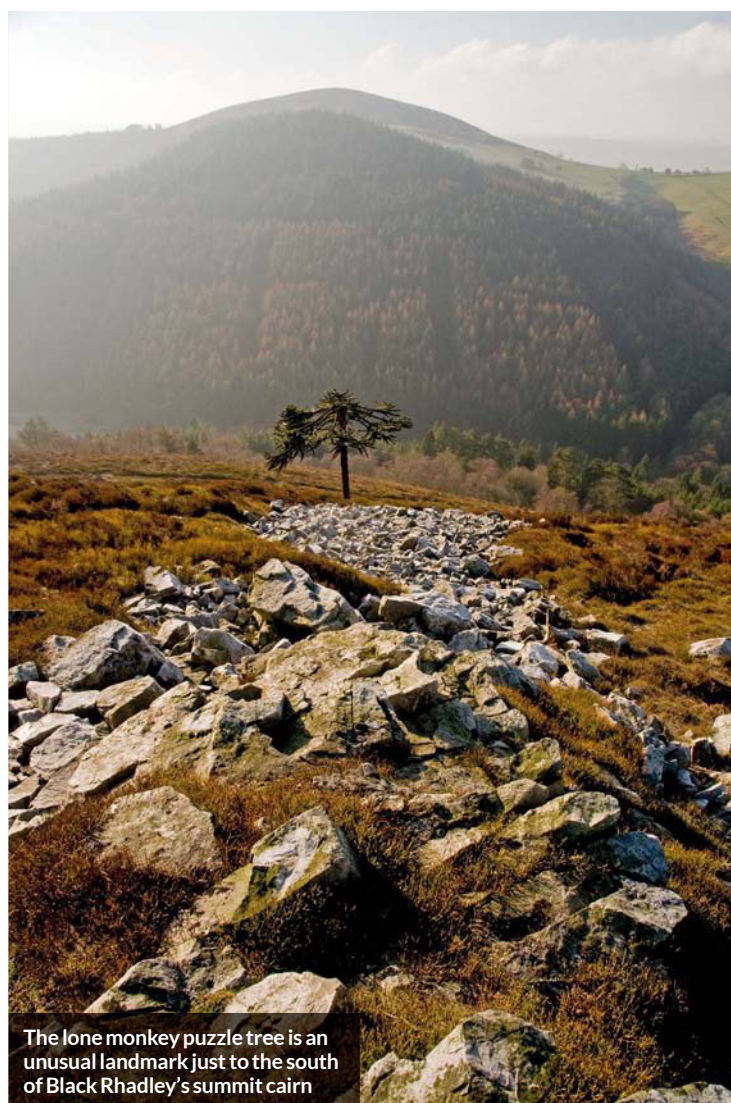
Words & Pictures: Roger Butler

### Further information

**Maps:** OS 1:25,000 Explorer Sheet 216 (Welshpool & Montgomery)

**Transport:** Nearest rail station Craven Arms. Very limited options for bus travel - [seeshropshire.gov/bustimes](http://seeshropshire.gov/bustimes)

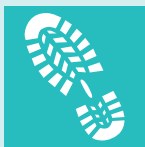
**Information:** Craven Arms visitor information, 03456 789024



The lone monkey puzzle tree is an unusual landmark just to the south of Black Rhadley's summit cairn



8



10½km / 6½ miles / 3-4 hours

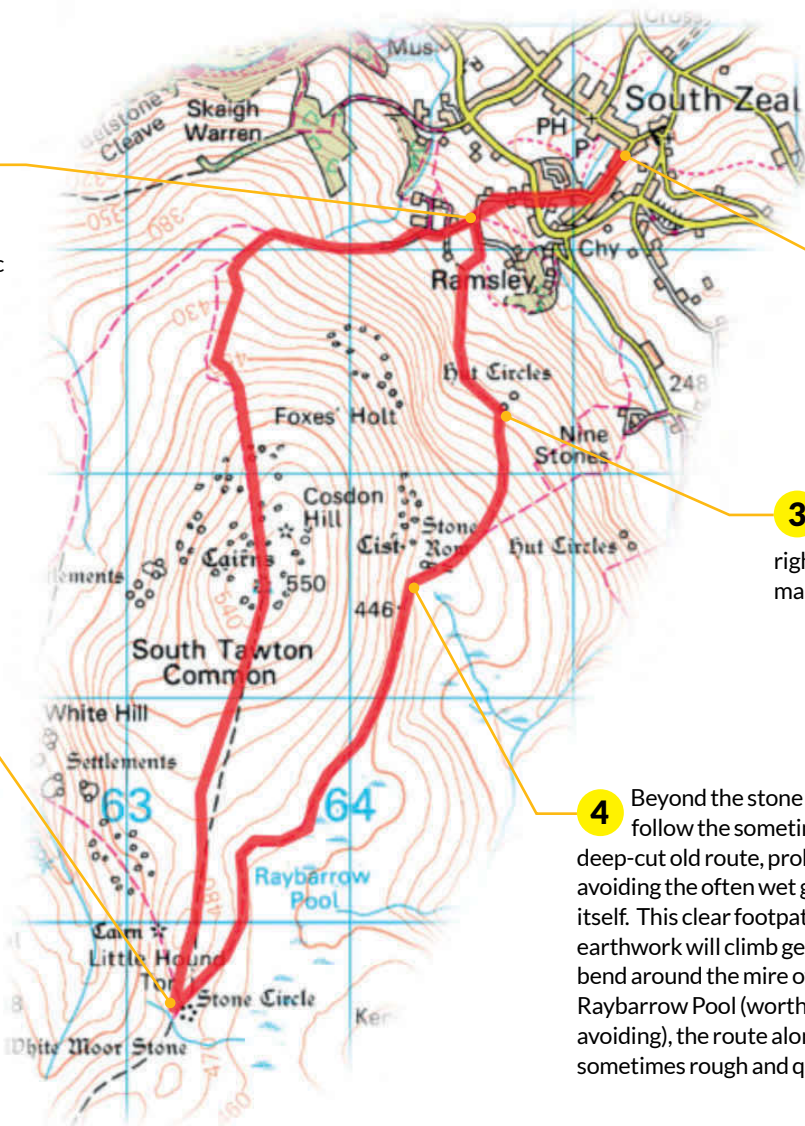
Ascent 360m/1180ft



## Cawsand (aka Cosdon Hill), Devon **ENGLAND**

**2** After about 200m, take a left turn to leave the track and follow a path (marked Public Bridleway), rejoining the road again after a short climb. Almost immediately, take the left turn off the track, to follow the sunken lane. You will soon find a reassuring wooden finger post on your right, marked CAWSAND AND THE MOOR.

**5** At the stone circle, almost double back on yourself, taking the clear path over Little Hound Tor, and then up and over Cawsand itself. This path leads to the entrance to the sunken track returning to South Zeal.



### Start/Finish

South Zeal CP GR: SX652934

**1** From the CP in South Zeal, follow the road uphill, keeping right at the fork, to cross the B3260, taking the bridleway directly opposite.

**3** Emerging onto the open moor, bear right to take the path making for rising ground.

**4** Beyond the stone row, follow the sometimes deep-cut old route, probably avoiding the often wet gully itself. This clear footpath/earthwork will climb gently to bend around the mire of Raybarrow Pool (worth avoiding), the route alongside sometimes rough and quite wet.

### Gradient profile Metres above sea level

600  
400  
200  
0



Walked by  
**Tim Gent**

### What's in a name?

ASK A RESIDENT OF SOUTH ZEAL for directions to Cosdon Hill, and they may well look blank. Despite being marked on all OS maps by that name, the rounded dome that looms over the village to the south is known locally as Cawsand. This preference evidently extends to the local rights of way office, and as you

make your way uphill, following the old trackways out onto the moor, the footpath and bridleway signs point towards Cawsand too.

If you've ever wondered what it might have been like to travel in Britain in the past, before cars, before even stagecoaches hit our roads, then this walk out to the moorland edge offers a good idea.

At a time when the pack-horse was the articulated lorry of the day, at least in upland areas, these tracks would have been the sort of thoroughfare experienced by travellers on all but the most major routes. As we wound our way uphill, the path cut into the bare rock by countless feet and hooves, wiggly stone walls and





On the moor near Raybarrow Pool

ancient holly trees standing high on either side, it could as easily have been 1015 as the present day.


Breaking out onto unenclosed ground, we were soon propelled back even further. Set tight under the eastern flank of Cawsand, three closely spaced rows of stone, a double burial cyst placed close to the upper end, were probably built at some point between 2,500 and 2,000 BC. Some would argue that what is often called the Cemetery

or Graveyard stone alignment was constructed, at least in part, as a navigational aid for travellers on this very route. After following the rutted and deeply cut path out onto the open moor above, and as we came across another prehistoric stone setting, sat square, or in this case circular, across a meeting of paths, this suggestion looked quite convincing.


It is here, at White Moor Down stone circle, that we turned to plod on, first over nearby Little Hound Tor, and then the broad dome of Cawsand itself, visiting the trig point and remains of a stone beacon at the summit. With cloud thickening, but still with wonderful views over the surrounding moor and out across lowland Devon beyond, we then dropped downhill to find another ancient sunken lane, and the route back to the village. 

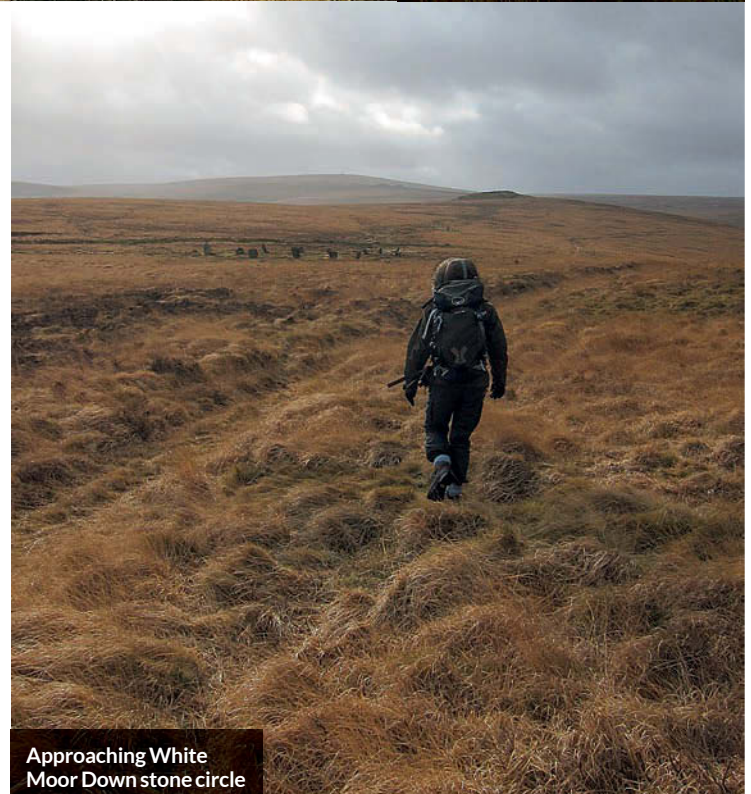
Words & Pictures: Tim Gent

### Further information

 **Maps:** OS 1:25,000 Explorer OL28

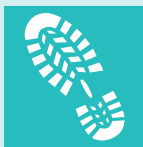
 **Transport:** Dartline 178 from Okehampton (01392 872990)

 **Information:** Okehampton (01837 53020)



Approaching White Moor Down stone circle





## St Briavels Castle to Chepstow Castle

ENGLAND/WALES



Walked by  
**Martin Sweeney**

### A tale of two castles

THE SOUTH WALES BORDER is dotted with castles and holdfasts, testament to the turbulent history of the region. This fine walk in the lower reaches of the Wye Valley links two of the most impressive surviving Norman fortresses in the area.

St. Briavels Castle, now a youth hostel, has served as royal castle, hunting lodge and debtor's prison during its 800 year history, and still makes its imposing presence felt high above the east bank of the River Wye. From St. Briavels, I strolled downhill towards the river with vast views unfolding across the valley beneath me, before entering ancient woodland and wandering alongside a small section of the original Offa's Dyke. The remaining ancient earthworks are hidden away beneath a shady canopy by a moss-carpeted dry stone wall.

- 3** The track drops gradually to the river bank and continues to follow the Wye, reaching Brockweir Bridge. Cross the bridge and head down to the river bank again almost immediately, heading S through the grounds of the Old Station in Tintern. The track is now marked as the Wye Valley Walk, and is followed to the main road in Tintern and as far as Tintern Abbey.



### Finish Chepstow Castle GR: ST533941

- 4** An easily missed lane leads steeply uphill almost opposite the abbey, and from here way markers for the Wye Valley Walk can be followed up onto the escarpment and on into Chepstow.

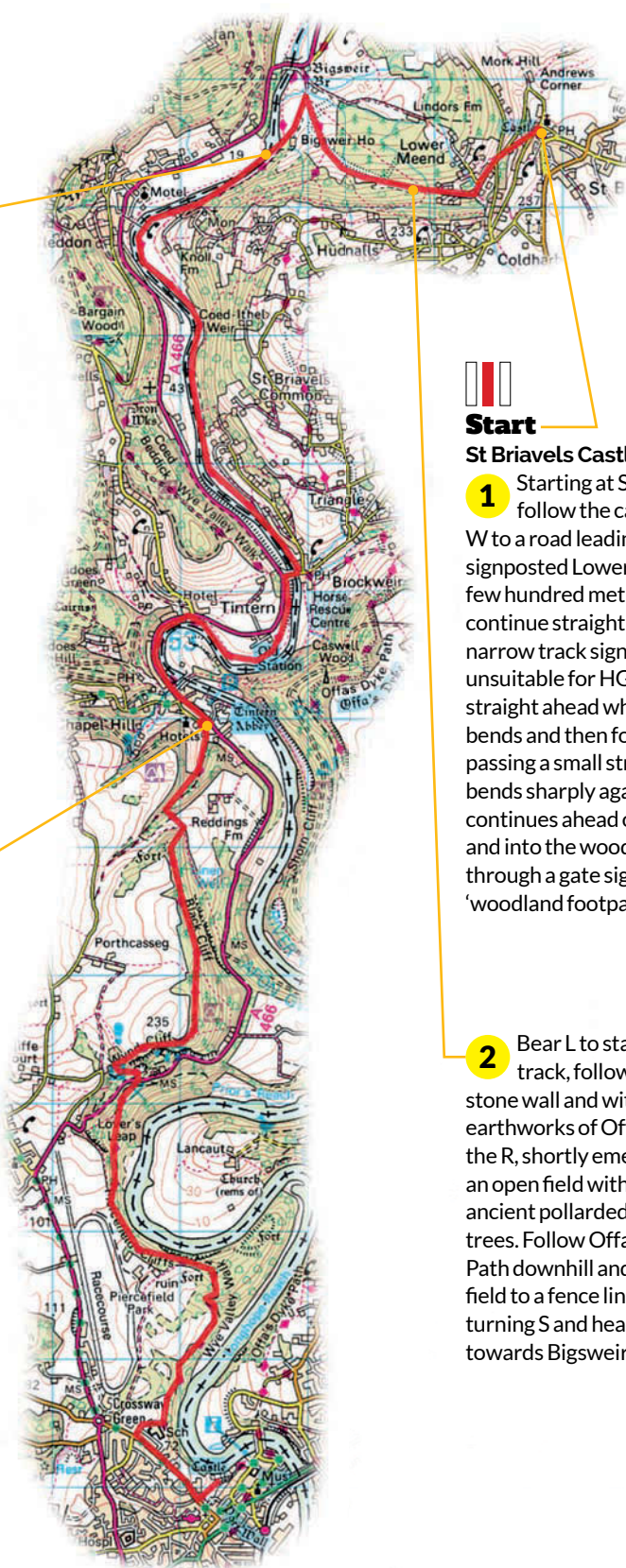


### Start

St Briavels Castle GR: SO558045

- 1** Starting at St. Briavels Castle, follow the castle wall around W to a road leading downhill, signposted Lower Meend. After a few hundred metres on this road, continue straight ahead on a narrow track signposted as unsuitable for HGVs. Continue straight ahead where the road bends and then follow the track R, passing a small stream. The track bends sharply again, but the route continues ahead on another track and into the woods, passing through a gate signposted 'woodland footpath'.

- 2** Bear L to stay on the track, following a dry stone wall and with the earthworks of Offa's Dyke to the R, shortly emerging into an open field with a line of ancient pollarded chestnut trees. Follow Offa's Dyke Path downhill and through a field to a fence line, before turning S and heading towards Bigsweir House.



### Gradient profile Metres above sea level





I emerged from the woods by a line of other-worldly, gnarled chestnut trees, and continued downhill. After crossing a couple of fields, I reached the Wye and wandered along its muddy banks to Brockweir Bridge. As the highest river port upstream on the Wye navigable to large ships, Brockweir was an important settlement until the early 20th century, but with its role as a frontier town of sorts came a certain notoriety with lawlessness and drunkenness commonplace among the dockworkers of the town. There's


little evidence of that aspect of its history in present day Brockweir, now a pleasant and sleepy village.

Crossing to the western bank of the river, I soon reached the medieval St Michael's Chapel on the edge of Tintern, before passing through the village towards the famous Tintern Abbey, inspiration for works by Wordsworth and Tennyson among others.

My route from Tintern took me high above the valley once more, following the Wye Valley Walk through more dense woodland to the top of the escarpment above

Black Cliff, where birdsong became louder than the distant murmur of traffic and the sweet scent of wild garlic filled the air. Wyndcliffe and the spectacular Eagle's Nest viewpoint came next as I continued along the high ground, enjoying the views of the crags at Wintour's Leap, both Severn Bridges and Chepstow Castle. The viewpoint and track were cut out of the woodland in the 18th century by Valentine Morris to form the end point of the Piercefield Walk, which links a series of impressive vantage points above the river.

Descending once more towards the valley floor, I continued through the old Piercefield Estate, passing more viewpoints and the 'Giant's Cave', which was carved out of the rock at around the same time as Eagle's Nest. Eventually the track emerged from the woods on the outskirts of Chepstow, close to the 11th century castle, which still stands as the oldest Norman castle in the country.

Spectacular scenery amidst centuries of living history made this a truly memorable day's walk between the two castles. 

Words & Pictures: Martin Sweeney

## Further information



**Maps:** Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 Explorer sheet OL14 (Wye Valley and Forest of Dean)



**Transport:** There is one bus running 3 days a week between Chepstow and St Briavels. See [traveline.info](http://traveline.info) for more information.



**Information:** Chepstow Tourist Information Centre, Bridge Street, Chepstow (01291 623772)



**Accommodation:** YHA St Briavels (01629 59270), [stbriavels@yha.org.uk](mailto:stbriavels@yha.org.uk), [yha.org.uk](http://yha.org.uk)





10



19½km/12 miles/6 hours

Ascent 727m/2385ft



## Mawddach Trail, Snowdonia WALES

**Start/Finish** Snowdonia National Park  
Car Park at Penmaenpool GR: SH695185

**2** Upon reaching the car park at Arthog, head inland following the river upstream to the small chapel by the main road. Carefully cross the road and climb the steep steps marked by a footpath fingerpost, continuing to climb through the woods around Arthog Hall to reach remains at Llys Bradwen.

**1** From the car park at Penmaenpool follow the former railway line W past the George III public house and onwards for 7.5km as it winds its way along the edge of the beautiful Mawddach Estuary.

**13** At the bottom of the track look for the footpath fingerpost indicating through an iron gate to the main road. Carefully cross the road to arrive back at the car park.

**12** Cross a stile and descend steeply through the woods, the narrow path joining a forestry track just past a small reservoir.

**11** As the track begins to descend, look for the wooden stile in the wall near Dolgedr. Take the path E towards Maes Angharad but at farm buildings take the path N towards the woods.

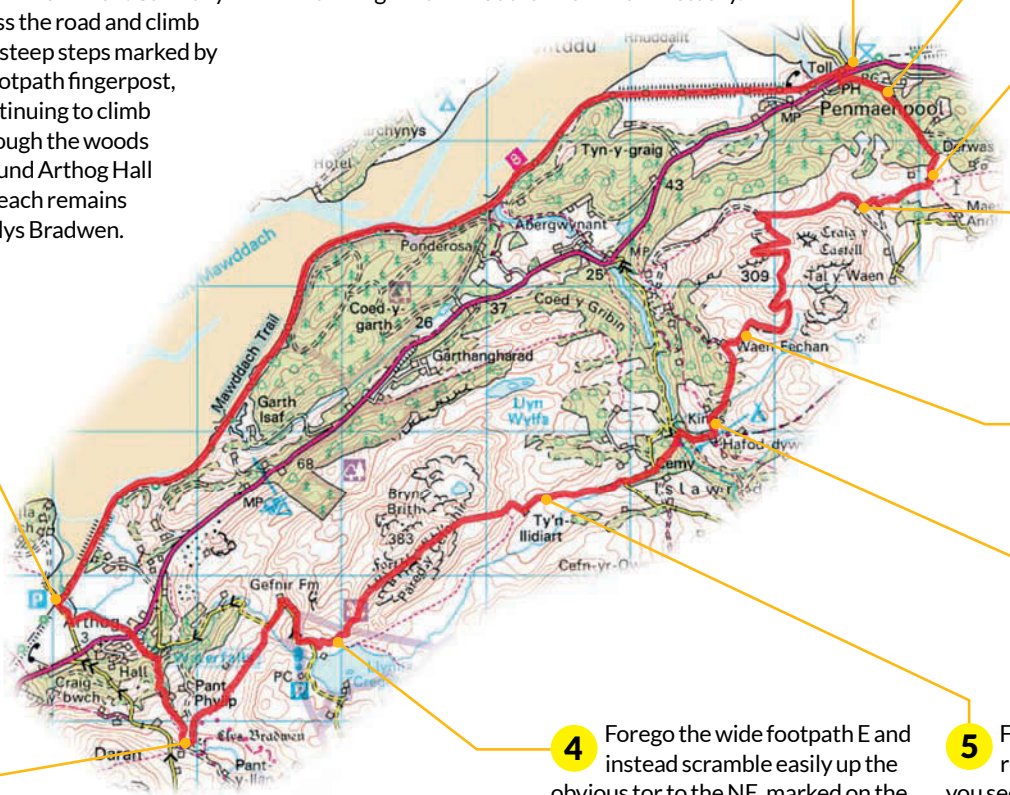
**10** Take the farm track leading NE from Waen Fechan and follow as it winds its way around small peaks and drumlins past Craig y Castell.

**9** Carefully negotiate the farmyard to find a path at the rear which leads N then breaks away from the stone wall to climb through woodland to Waen Fechan.

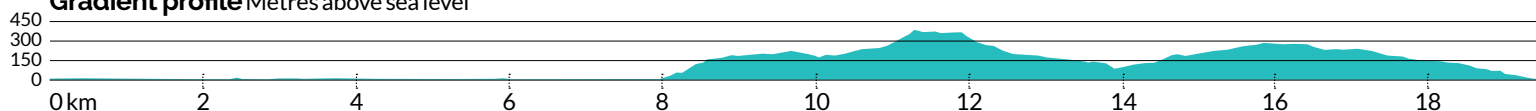
**4** Forego the wide footpath E and instead scramble easily up the obvious tor to the NE, marked on the OS map as a fort. Continue NE along the crest of Pared y Cefn hir descending at its eastern end to the farmstead at Ty'n Lliidiart.

**5** Follow the farm track until it meets the tarmac road and continue for 300m eastwards until you see the ruins of a small chapel and graveyard. Take the footpath opposite to descend to Kings Youth Hostel. Walk through the grounds of the hostel and cross the packhorse bridge past the campsite to Hafod dywyll.

**3** Take the footpath N - NE which contours through farmland to reach a tarmac road at Gefnir Farm. Continue along the road steeply uphill to find Llynau Cregennen, a fabulous place for a picnic.



### Gradient profile Metres above sea level



Walked by  
**Andrew Galloway**

### Mawddach: from sea to sky

I AWOKE TO THE SOUNDS AND smells of bacon and sausages frying in a large iron frying pan. David had lit the cast iron wood burner and was busy preparing breakfast on its scalding surface, kettle steaming, frying pan spitting like a nest of vipers.

"I thought you'd appreciate a good breakfast before your walk."

I nodded dozily, still only half awake from a deep sleep which had been haunted by the plaintive cries of owls. As the smells of freshly brewed coffee drew me to the kitchen, my gaze was drawn through the half open window towards the precipitous northern bulwarks of Cadair Idris, where the morning mist was rising above Idris's Table,

backlit by the sun, as if the giant himself were boiling the bones of men who had fallen from the Cyfrwy Arete for his morning meal.

Stepping out into the farmyard I was greeted by a menagerie of animals. Two dozen Lley and Beulah Speckled-Faced sheep shared the rough pasture of Waen Fechan with a pedigree





The Mawddach Estuary



Cadair Idris from Pared-y-cefn-hir

### Further information



**Maps:** Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 Cadair Idris & Llyn Tegid OL23



**Transport:** The Dolgellau - Machynlleth bus stops at Penmaenpool and the Dolgellau to Barmouth bus service is easily accessed by taking the short walk over the toll bridge to Taicynhaef.



**Information:** Snowdonia National Park Information Centre (01341 422888, TIC. [Dolgellau@eryri-npa.gov.uk](mailto:Dolgellau@eryri-npa.gov.uk))

Dexter bull known as Pongo, a dozen or so Bantam chickens and two territorially possessive white Embden geese. In a separate field, Pongo's mistress, a heifer named Purdy, was contemplatively chewing the cud and tending to her young calf.


The sun now rising high above the cauldron of Cadair Idris, I headed eastwards through the crags and drumlins around Craig y Castell, below which the Mawddach Estuary snaked its way westwards to the Irish Sea, a thin blanket of mist still hanging above

the silver waters. At Penmaenpool I stopped by the George III pub for a coffee and watched the occasional car rumble across the grade II listed wooden-slatted toll bridge to Port Borthwnog. From Penmaenpool the route of the former Great Western Railway, which ran between Ruabon and Barmouth between 1869 and 1965, provided the perfect means to explore this most beautifully serene of Welsh estuaries. I sat for some time overlooking the estuary, watching the herons, curlews and oyster catchers seeking out fish and bivalves, and meditated on the waxing and waning of the tides, back-and-forth across the salt flats like quicksilver.

Upon reaching the hamlet of Arthog, I took leave of the estuary and, passing a picturesque Welsh chapel, climbed through woodlands of sessile oak where the river Arthog tumbled in singing cascades. Beyond the woods the Afon Arthog is crossed by a stone clapper bridge which marked the location of Llys Bradwen, the medieval ruins of a manor house which once belonged to Ednowain ap Bradwen a 12th Century chieftain.

A short climb to the east of Llys Bradwen the northern buttresses

of Tyrrau Mawr and Cadair Idris provided a dramatic backdrop to Llynau Cregennen. A popular location for fly fishing, the lakes here are stocked with wild brown and rainbow trout. The picnic tables by the lakeshore can become crowded, particularly in the summer months, so I scrambled to the summit of the crag known as Pared y Cefn Hir for much welcome relief. The site of an iron age hill fort, the ridge continued eastwards offering a panoramic view of Cadair Idris to the south, the Mawddach estuary to the west and below into the Gwynant valley to the east, a majestic setting for the Kings youth hostel among the ancient woodland of larches and silver birch that cling to the valley slopes on either side of the river.

Upon returning to Waen Fechan the muffled sounds of a commotion drew me into the cattle shed. They were slaughtering the spring calf, its warm blood spilling onto the cold stone floor of the shippon. Turning my back on the gruesome scene, I stepped out into the yard, where amongst the darkling oaks a sharp mew and a flash of white caught my eye. It was the owl, heading off again on her nightly hunt. 

Words & Pictures: Andrew Galloway



# The Great Outdoors

The **Great Outdoors** digital magazine gives you effortless and immediate access to back issues of the UK's leading hillwalking magazine

DOWNLOAD  
back issues  
**ONLY**  
**£2.99**  
each



## MARCH 2015

Winter in the Highlands, the Lake District with Alan Hinkes, Sweden's Arctic, Ben Alder, insulated jackets & winter equipment put to the test



## FEBRUARY 2015

Winter guides to The Highlands and Lake District, a trip to Sweden's wilderness, navigation skills for the hills & the best insulated jackets



## JANUARY 2015

Walk All Winter guide, Ray Mears in Canada, Pacific Crest Trail, 2014's best gear, mapped walks in Wales, Lake District, Scotland & Yorkshire



## DECEMBER 2014

Britain's ultimate pub walks, Morocco, backpacking in Glen Shiel, best new winter gear and essential winter preparation



## NOVEMBER 2014

Autumn Highlands, Ed Byrne's Fjällräven Classic, Eskdale secret walks, Ogwen Valley, Ireland sea cliffs, safety & thermal gear tested



## OCTOBER 2014

Scotland's greatest weekends, 10 overseas treks & challenges, Lyke Wake Walk, TGO Challenge 2015, synthetic insulation



[WWW.TGOMAGAZINE.CO.UK/MOREINFO](http://WWW.TGOMAGAZINE.CO.UK/MOREINFO)



Download on the  
**App Store**



Available on  
**Pocketmags**



Available on  
**Kindle Fire**



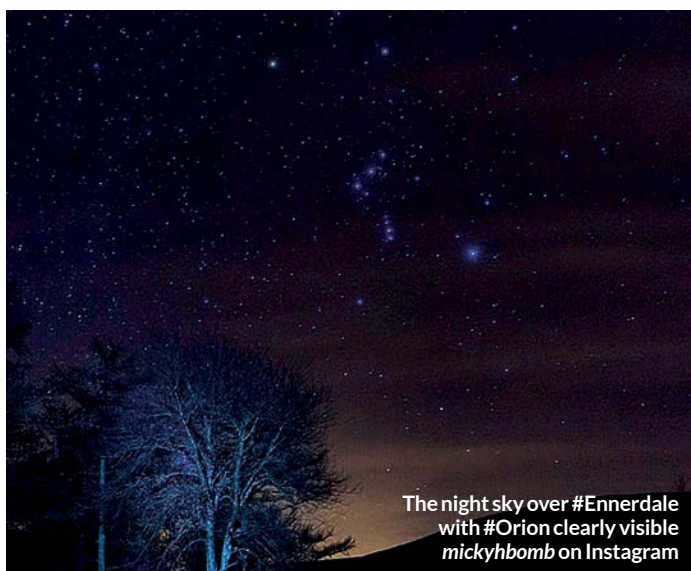
Available on  
**Google play**



# 'Winter nights'



Isle of Harris  
David Knowles



The night sky over #Ennerdale  
with #Orion clearly visible  
*mickybomb on Instagram*



The winter constellation  
of Canis Major, seen from  
the Lincolnshire Fens  
*Harry Sheldon*

In our readers' photography series, we ask you to send in your best pictures on a specific theme. Next is 'friends' by 18 March and then 'my favourite gear' by 15 April.

Next month: **'Friends.'** (Bless...)

Send your pics to [editorial@tgomagazine.co.uk](mailto:editorial@tgomagazine.co.uk)  
or The Editor, The Great Outdoors, Newsquest Specialist  
Media, 30 Cannon Street, London, EC4M 6YJ



Tag your Instagram shots with **#TGO**  
**#TheGreatOutdoors** and we'll share them!





Glenmore Lodge instructors  
are kept warm and dry  
thanks to The North Face  
Summit Series Range



Glenmore Lodge & Ellis  
Brigham - Equipping  
you for the mountain



sportscotland  
**glenmorelodge**  
national outdoor training centre

# Inspiring Adventure

[www.glenmorelodge.org.uk](http://www.glenmorelodge.org.uk)

We are Scotland's National Outdoor Training Centre  
located in the heart of Cairngorms National Park.

Learn, develop or qualify in an adventure sport of your choice.  
Our goal is to inspire adventure by teaching beginners,  
coaching intermediate/advanced and delivering training  
and assessment courses for leaders and instructors.



“

Sara Wiland, Product developer at Fjällräven

Because all women  
are not created equally  
we have come up  
with a new fit for  
our trousers”



Övik Trousers Curved W

## CURVED FOR COMFORT

THIS SUMMER, we have extended our award-winning range of outdoor trousers with the introduction of a new *Curved Fit*. Featuring a more accentuated waist and a little extra width across the rear and thighs, our *Curved Fit* trousers are designed to offer unmatched comfort and freedom of movement on your adventures.

Developed especially for women, our *Curved Fit* trousers promise an optimum fit free from tightness or gaps at the back of the waist. The new *Curved Fit* complements our existing *Regular* and *Comfort fits* and is featured on our bestselling *Övik W* and *Nikka* models.



See our entire collection at  
[www.fjallraven.co.uk](http://www.fjallraven.co.uk)